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JAPAN SLASH

After retreating to low-angle pockets because of the avy danger of their original objective, Grant Gunderson captured longtime friend and ski partner Adam Ü in Nozawa Onsen, Japan. With a foot of fresh and in the best light Gunderson has ever seen in his eight January trips, Ü slashed through the depths, leaving hanging specters of snow to glint in their slow fall back to the thick, white blanket.

—PADDY O'CONNELL

*Adam Ü in Nozawa Onsen, Japan,
by Grant Gunderson*



**NORTHERN LIGHT**

"Our timing was a little off because we hit the archipelago during a storm, and light like this was rare. But when it hit, wow. It was unlike anywhere else I'd been," says photographer Adam Clark. Lofoten, Norway, has seen human activity for more than 11,000 years, and fishing, for both cod and tourist coin, is its financial lattice. With a striking juxtaposition of sea and snow, Old World fishing village and skiing, Clark captures Austin Ross in a beautiful left footer. —P.O.

Austin Ross in Lofoten, Norway, by Adam Clark



**MUTE GRAB**

Say "Cheese!" Pit Viper's Chuck Mumford kept it retro in the swirling crystals of spindrift at Brighton, Utah. Photographer Reuben Krabbe got creative when shooting on crusty old snow. Rather than asking Mumford to send big airs, Krabbe instructed the goofball in neon sunglasses to pop off small rock features. The shadow Mumford casts here indicates the enormity of his character. —P.O.

"The" Chuck Mumford, in Brighton, Utah, by Reuben Krabbe



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BREAKING TRAIL

"MY NAME IS KIM BEEKMAN, AND YES, I am a woman."

That was the gist of my impromptu spiel at a reception AIM Media threw with the Outdoor Industry Women's Coalition to celebrate the selection of *Skiing*'s first female editor in its 67 years. Rising to that post may be a decent accomplishment. But my greater feat was working here for 11 years without getting fired. (Trigger-happy, people-hating Florida-based former owners, I'm rudely pointing my finger at you.)

Maybe someday it will be surprising if all the important people in a company are men. But right now I am honored to be the first woman at the helm of *Skiing* Magazine. Skiers are skiers. Writers are writers. Some have boobs. Some pee standing up. No matter. Here we are, all of us passionate about this sport that sets us free.

I am grateful to our current owners, AIM Media, for believing in our magazine. (CEO Andy Clurman and publisher Al Crolus got their start at *Skiing* some 35 years ago.)

I am grateful to my predecessor, Sam Bass, whose vision, creativity, perseverance, and bathroom bumper stickers (see page 62) will always remain part of us. I'm grateful for our two newcomers: digital editor Leslie Hittmeier, whose insanely good photographic sensibilities have already gotten us *so* many likes, and associate editor Paddy O'Connell, whose interpretive dance routines to lady pop are almost as good as his writing (see pages 34 and 66). Our tireless photo editor Keri Bascetta and creative designer/animal whisperer Signé Higgins both continue to turn these pages into art (see...every page).

Skiing is on the brink of something amazing. Or at the very least something that smells like success. Which to us means ski-boot liners drying by the fire, brats boiling in beer, and that beautiful, wet scent of huge flakes drifting down.

Thanks for reading. If you have any complaints, please contact Sam Bass at 720-867-5309 or samuelgoodman-bass@gmail.com.

K Beek

KIMBERLY BEEKMAN
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VAIL RESORTS NOW RUNS THE LARGEST SKI RESORT IN THE UNITED STATES. KNOCK US OVER WITH A FEATHER.

Like the neighbors who raze the bungalow to build a palace, Vail Resorts is making its presence felt in Park City with a decade's worth of improvements packed (impressively, we admit) into one ski season. The upgrade that has everyone riled is the Interconnect Gondola, tethering Park City Mountain Resort to Canyons Resort—and creating a new megaresort with the most skiable acres in the country. The state-of-the-art gondola runs from the base of PCMR's Silverlode lift to the base of the Flatiron lift, which sits midmountain at Canyons' southeast boundary. The

gondola reduces travel time between the resorts from about 40 minutes to nine minutes.

Less sexy improvements at PCMR include upgrading the King Con (from high-speed quad to six-pack) and Motherlode (fixed triple to high-speed quad) chairs and transforming the Snow Hut restaurant into a 500-seat affair next door to the new Interconnect Gondola terminal. At Canyons, the Red Pine Lodge received a facelift. If you're like us, you're excited—and kinda scared—to see which superlative VR takes on next.



Ted Ligety makes severe angles in the FIS world championship super-G at Beaver Creek, Colorado.

SKI RACING NATION

THE ALPINE WORLD SKI CHAMPIONSHIPS GARNER WAY LESS ATTENTION THAN THE OLYMPICS. BUT AMERICAN SKIERS ARE STARTING TO CARE.

By Nathaniel Vinton

Before January 31, 2001, it was practically unheard of for alpine ski racing to make the front page of *The New York Times*; the Americans just didn't leave that much to write home about. But there he was on A1, fearless Californian downhiller Daron Rahlves, taking a gold medal at the FIS Alpine World Ski Championships in St. Anton, Austria.

"U.S. Skier Wins in Upset," it said beneath a picture of the grinning golden boy. The item was a *reefer*, which in *Times* terminology means a small photo or paragraph up front referring readers to a feature story deeper in the newspaper. The caption read, "In a rare victory for American men, Daron Rahlves won the super-G race at the alpine world championships in Austria."

It was shocking enough that a slight 27-year-old from Truckee had snatched the win from Austrian heavyweights Hermann Maier and Stephan Eberharter, crowd favorites at the peak of their powers. The U.S. Ski Team wasn't considered a factor at the championships, which had seen just four American men win medals in the previous 30 years. The women had done only a little bit better.

But it was a watershed moment for the U.S. Ski Team, the start of a long renaissance that has been most visible at the FIS Alpine World Ski Championships, a race

series that takes place every other February in odd-numbered years.

Since Rahlves's stunning win at St. Anton, American ski racers have won 13 world championship titles, along with another 19 silver and bronze medals. Lindsey Vonn and Bode Miller have led the way, but no fewer than 10 different men and women have followed Rahlves to the podium, among them athletes born as far apart as 1972 (Erik Schlopy) and 1996 (Mikaela Shiffrin).

Maybe it has something to do with the giant cash bonuses ski companies dispense to champions. Maybe it has something to do with the courses, which are generally steeper and scarier than those at the Olympics. Or maybe there's just something about the American skiers, long underappreciated at home, stepping things up for the big occasion when NBC turns its cameras their way.

And the world championships are a big occasion. Last February's edition at Beaver Creek saw 500 athletes from 68 nations compete, their performances broadcast around the world in more than 70 live television hours. Some 125,000 spectators trekked to the finish-line viewing platforms at the redesigned Red Tail Camp, while another 16,000 attended nightly awards ceremonies in Vail that doubled as concerts featuring the likes of CeeLo Green, O.A.R., and Barenaked Ladies.

With Tiger Woods on hand to support Vonn, and Miller's spectacular and bloody crash dominating the highlight reels, there was plenty of drama for the American media to chew on. The *Times* could still run reefers, but this was Colorado in 2015, when the word had reverted to its usual meaning.

First staged in 1931, the FIS championships predate alpine skiing's inclusion in the Winter Games by nearly two decades. Though smaller than the Olympics, they offer a better show for the spectator; the downhill courses are usually more challenging, and there are no distractions like figure skating and curling. The whole event is staged from a single ski town, with fans and athletes often occupying the same intimate hotels.

It's traditional for the bigger national teams to rent out whole restaurants for the duration of the two-week event as gathering places for team sponsors and party venues in case one of their athletes wins a medal. Any determined fan can find a way into the Austria Haus or Chez France and toast the newest champion.

Up on the mountains, the FIS puts fewer barriers than the IOC does between



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the athletes and their fans. You can usually find a perch alongside a world championship course to watch the race, whereas at Sochi, for instance, the ski areas were closed to the public and the ridges surrounding the race venue were patrolled by gun-toting soldiers in winter camouflage.

Like the Games, the championships are an 11-race series spread over two weeks. Each day sees men's or women's installments of super G, downhill, the super combined, GS, or slalom. There's also the Nations Team Event, where athletes race head-to-head on parallel courses.

As in the Olympics, national teams can enter no more than four skiers for each race (on the World Cup tour, the best teams can enter 10 or more athletes per race). An exception is made for the reigning champion; win an event at the worlds and your start position in that discipline, next time around, doesn't cost your nation a quota spot.

Since Ted Ligety and Mikaela Shiffrin won the men's GS and women's slalom February in Beaver Creek, the U.S. team will have five starters in each of those disciplines when the next championships roll around, February 6 to 19, 2017, in St. Moritz, Switzerland.

Statistically speaking, that might be your best chance to hear "The Star-Spangled Banner" at the awards plaza, something no American newspaper will ever call an "upset" again. ♦

Nate Vinton is a frequent *Skiing* contributor and the author of *The Fall Line*, the definitive book about World Cup racing. He writes for the *New York Daily News*.

FROM TOP: Mikaela Shiffrin snaps a selfie with fans. A racer skids to a stop as packed stands await results.

500

ATHLETES in the 2015 world championships at Beaver Creek

68

NATIONS competing

70

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ATTENDANCE at the nightly awards ceremonies in Vail

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DROPPING IN

EVERY DAY IS VETERANS DAY

WHY EXPERIENCED EXPERTS HAVE ALL THE FUN. By Rob Story



Not halfway through my first lift-served turn of 2014–15, my right hand got bored and went rogue. Although I had asked nothing of my right hand besides repeated pole plants, it shirked its duties. It fled to my crotch and...zipped up my fly. Oh. Thanks, right hand. I was wondering where that scrotal breeze came from.

Beginners and intermediates surely come to a complete stop before addressing wardrobe malfunctions. Good for them, but I haven't checked the Level I box since the 1970s. Say what you will about my form, but you cannot deny my vast oceans of experience piloting sandwiched laminates down frozen water molecules. To seasoned old-timers like me, a midslope visit to one's undercarriage is not a violation of the Skier Safety Code; it's multitasking. A true veteran move.

My brain's "Ski!" algorithm predates even its "Get drunk!" and "Have sex!" algorithms. During that first lift-served turn, skier's intuition bent my knees, pressured the inside edge, and allowed the turn to elapse without incident—never mind the hand fiddling around the junk.

It was the day after Thanksgiving at Telluride. Scant terrain had opened, so tourists and locals lapped the same runs in hazardous clusters. The slope below, Misty Maiden, appeared booby-trapped with camo huntingwear and gross incompetence.

I caught up to a group of teenage flatlanders. I subconsciously processed rental skis, spanking-new jackets, and the way their lift tickets slapped their faces, owing to their unfathomable attachment at the neck.

Together, we curved onto a bottlenecking cat track. Sensing danger, I scanned for data with *Terminator* urgency. While there's no predicting the random vectors and sudden tangents flatlanders take, a decades-old ski brain somehow calibrates that which cannot be calibrated.

Sure enough, a dude in an orange jacket got in the back seat and lurched, out of control, across the track into my line. Having intuited his approach angle, though, I floated safely around the chaos on the wings of a barely conscious check-turn.

It's good to be king. I just wish veteran wisdom traveled better.

Which brings us to March in Smithers, B.C. After lousy conditions eighty-sixed a planned back-country tour, a stocky ex-racer from Victoria and I retreated in-bounds, to Hudson Bay Ski Area. (No, I'd never heard of it before either.) We boarded a chairlift with no inkling of the trauma ahead.

Near the lift's apex came a reminder that "experience at skiing" does not equal "experience at

Hudson Bay Ski Area." As I prepared to dismount, my pack momentarily obscured the lower side of the lift ramp—which, in this dry winter, was a severe wooden wall.

I hefted my pack. I caught a glimpse of my skis, my left tip approaching the wall three inches too low...

Shit.

Bam! The chair jerked backward. Momentum body-slammed me, with flyswatter torque, at the feet of the liftie. "Jesus!" he yelled. My skis ripped off. No longer impeded, the chair jerked forward, ejecting the Victoria man with a thud as I felt for broken ribs.

Doing the math, we get: 2 skiers down + 1 alarmed liftie + 1 lift shutdown = 1 whopper of a rookie mistake. My bad. At the same time, I did add a whole new experience to this veteran's extensive ski résumé. "Lift-ramp tip catch" is the newest entry filed under Been There, Done That.

Telluride-based columnist **Rob Story** is also a veteran at using his left hand. But that is a story that belongs in another magazine.

COCKTAILS TO PAIR YOUR DRESS WITH



THE PALISADE

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- ½ oz thyme syrup*
- 3 slices fresh peaches (none of that canned crap)
- splash of soda water

Put peaches, lime juice, and thyme syrup into a mason jar. Muddle with the back of a wooden spoon. Fill jar with ice, add rum, and screw a top on it. Give it a good solid shake, and finish with soda water.

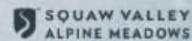
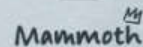
*Add 5 to 8 thyme sprigs to 3 cups of water and bring to a boil. Add 3 cups of sugar and stir until dissolved. Strain to remove thyme sprigs.

Skiing's guest bartender, **Crystal Sagan**, owns *3 Chicks Bartending*. She also skis a mean line. 3chicksbartending.com





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SWEET
NEW RIDEANOTHER MEANS OF
ACCESSING FRESH

The man vs. machine argument within backcountry skiing just got louder. Sledneck innovation has birthed the Timbersled Mountain Horse, a conversion kit that turns any dirt bike into a snow machine in about an hour. And with snow-mo king Polaris's recent purchase of Timbersled, the trend is definitely staged for a boom.

The kitted-out dirt bikes have less horsepower than snowmobiles but are far lighter and more versatile. They can sidehill on 45-degree slopes and maneuver through tight trees, over rocks, down pillow lines—just about anywhere the rider can squeeze the handlebars through. Because they're chain-driven rather than belt-driven, they have far better control on the downhill, and can tow skiers with no strain on the engine.

Backcountry purists, fear not: Snow bikes are still allowed only in snowmobile zones. So turn earners can still enjoy their mullet- and tribal tatoo-free peace and quiet. —PADDY O'CONNELL



GIZMOS

LEAVE
EVERY TRACEA NEW DEVICE TO TRACK
ALL YOUR STATS. AND IT
ACTUALLY WORKS.

There are apps that track your runs, speed (max and average), vert, airtime, distance traveled, and calories burned. But smartphones have always been dumb at correctly measuring how high that sick drop was. Even if they do get it right, you can't tell anyone because the app sucks all your battery life.

That's where the new Peppermint Pattie-size device called the Trace comes in. It syncs with an app called Trace Snow and is said to be 10 times more accurate than your phone at gathering your stats. It's GPS-enabled and comes with its own processor and battery, which takes two hours to charge and delivers about 10 hours of use depending on how adventurous you are. There's only one button, which is so easy to use even we couldn't screw it up.

Trace also syncs with footage from your POV cam. Download footy to the Trace Dropbox app, and it automatically cuts the non-action clips, corrects color, adds stats, and compiles everything on your video page. The only thing it doesn't do is count how many hot bystanders were watching when you biffed it.

—LESLIE HITTMEIER



Giuliano Bordini takes a test flight in the Dolomites.

PLANKS

FAIRE DU SKI

A CHAMONIX SKI COMPANY TAKES JACKSON BY STORM. YOUR HILL MIGHT BE NEXT.

After two seasons of testing the market in Jackson Hole, Chamonix-based Black Crows is officially launching its skis in the U.S. this season.

Founding partners Bruno Compagnet and Camille Jaccoux, both former pro freeriders, started making skis in 2006 when they weren't able to find a model that performed well in the variable conditions of the descent from Cham's 12,605-foot Aiguille du Midi. But they say their priorities are simply "more skiing, more fun." The result is a burly line of skis that doesn't take itself too seriously. (We love the quirky phrases on the sidewalls, like, "Don't forget the foreplay.") There are Black Crows poles and jackets too.

Keep an eye out for the flock logo this winter. Especially in Jackson. Or anywhere Squaw freeskier Michelle Parker, the brand's newest Crow, flies. —CRYSTAL SAGAN

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BRYON FRIEDMAN

THE CREATOR OF BAMBOO SKI POLES ON INJURY, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND *DAZED AND CONFUSED*.

Interviewed By Gordy Megroz

If the liftline at your local ski area is beginning to look like a bamboo grove, Bryon Friedman is responsible. In 2011 the Park City, Utah, native and former World Cup ski racer helped found Soul Poles, which makes ski poles from bamboo. Over the past four years, the poles have gone from a novelty item to a must-have among trendy skiers. Between R&D trips to South America and China, Friedman took some time to bare his soul.

In 2004, I was skiing as fast as I had in my entire life. I was making the top 10 at World Cup races and feeling like I could win. Then on January 5, 2005, in Chamonix, France, I'm on the side of the hill with a mangled leg. I'd shattered my tibia and fibula. That was the beginning of the transformation.

To rehab, I moved to Santa Barbara and fell in love with the ocean. I started writing and playing a lot of music and became much more emotionally sensitive. I took a trip to Africa in 2006. I just wanted to go and check it out. It was eye-opening in terms of how differently we live our lives. We have it good and it made me think about that.

I tried to return to racing for three years but I knew I was done. I'd had eight to 12 surgeries at that point. My first race back I suffered a hairline fracture to my fibula. In 2009, I went to U.S. Nationals and powder skied the whole week. Then I walked away quietly.

In 2010, my ex-teammate on the U.S. Ski Team, Erik Schlopy, started talking about making bamboo ski poles. We glued our old grips and tips from our race poles to bamboo poles to see what kind of response they got. Sure enough, every lift ride somebody would ask about them.

We formed an LLC in May of 2011. We put in \$100,000 as partners and raised another \$150,000. One of the original investors, a Wall Street guy, said, "Good luck. The odds are against you."

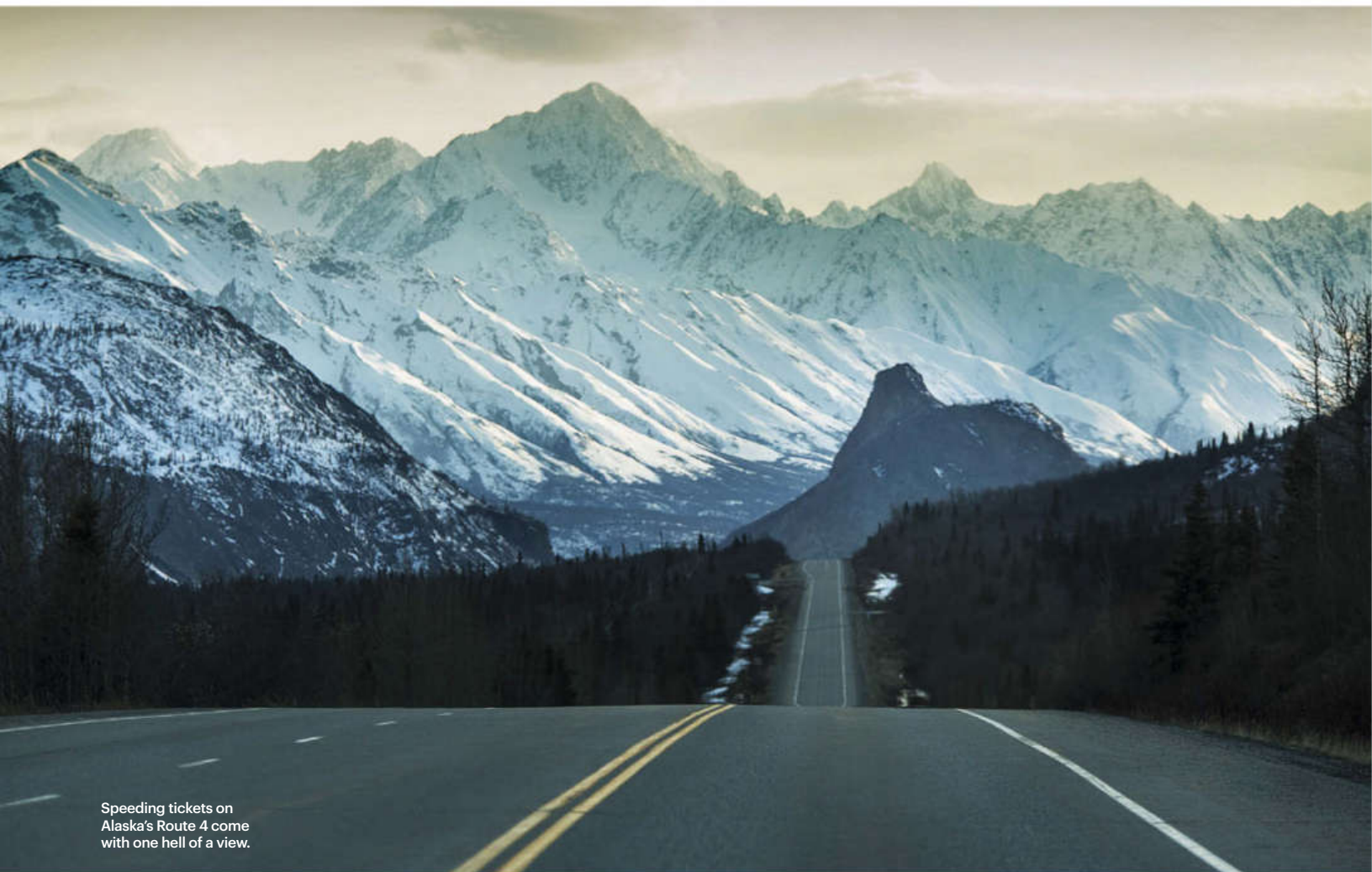
I believe we're making an impact. The data

is out there: Climate change is happening. Bamboo is a renewable resource that's easy on the environment. Bamboo poles aren't going to change the world but it gets the conversation going.

Initially the idea for the name came from the movie *Dazed and Confused*. The seniors all have paddles and one guy has a paddle called the Soul Pole. The more I thought about it, the more it made sense. The Japanese call it wabi-sabi, imperfect beauty. That's like our souls and that's the way the poles are too.

Our first order of bamboo was junk. It kept breaking. In November Erik left the company and I started making changes. I went to China and met with lots of bamboo distributors but wasn't having much luck finding anything that would work. Right before I was about to leave, I got this call from an American guy who had been sourcing bamboo for fly rods from this one family for 20 years. We drove far into the countryside but didn't see any bamboo. Then all of a sudden we see bamboo everywhere. I brought pictures to show them what we were using it for and they understood and delivered. They said, "If what we pick isn't what you want, we'll pay for it."

It's funny, you hear people say, "Get a job in the ski industry and you'll never ski." But when the snow is really good, I'm the first one out there. And I get to go on trips for the business. I get to go ski in Alaska every year. This summer I'm going to South America. It wasn't my intention to have a job where I could do these things. I'd skied enough. But doing all this has reinvigorated my love of skiing.



Speeding tickets on Alaska's Route 4 come with one hell of a view.

LESSONS FROM THE ROAD

IF YOU'RE A SKIER, YOU'RE A DRIVER FIRST.

By Paddy O'Connell

I descended Beartooth Pass and skirted the range, bought a \$5 shower in Cody, and drove barefoot through Shoshone, Yellowstone, and the Tetons, listening to new Americana and eating month-old candied almonds. I had been on the road for three months, with six weeks in front of me, in search of springtime turns. I found an abundance of wiggles atop both sweet corn and isothermal sludge. But when is it ever about the snow, really? Like fishermen and meteorologists, skiers are great liars. Typically the conditions are either "all time" or "super sketch." But if my adventure taught me anything, it's that laughter is the soundtrack to every skier's life.

Paddy O'Connell, *Skiing's* new associate editor, also uses car time to groom and feed his robust mustache.



Stripping skins to start another leg of the journey.

FROM TOP: BRIAN NEVINS; ROMAN NEIMANN



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10

HOW TO ROAD-TRIP RIGHT

THESE ESSENTIAL ITEMS WILL KEEP YOU ON THE ROAD, ENTERTAINED, AND ASSURED OF A CLEAN BUTT.

1 / SCENTED DRYER SHEETS

Stick them in your boots and A/C vents. Nothing kills morale faster than a car that smells like low tide.

2 / PEE CUP/HANDI WIPES/T.P.

Coffee and Red Bull will run through you, and making good time is important...right? (Sorry, ladies, but due to ongoing confusion about your bathing-suit area, I have nothing to offer by way of a girls' drive-'n'-pee. Other than a diaper.)

3 / CO-PILOT

My favorite is Mr. Potato Head. He is a terrible driver but a great listener.

4 / PACO PAD

Not just for boating. The greatest gift is a solid night's sleep.

5 / KINCOS

No matter the time of year, always have a pair of leather gloves in your rig. They handle tinfoiled potatoes coming out of the fire, diesel refuels, engine tinkering, and sausage-greased grills.

6 / OLD BEDSHEET OR TAPESTRY

Drapes, changing room, sunshade, flag for your fort... The possibilities are endless.

7 / P-CORD AND DUCT TAPE

Dirtbag welding can fix damn near anything.

8 / TUNES

Specifically lady pop. Mariah Carey can cut through the numbness of Nebraska like nothing else. Life is too short to pretend you do not love this genre. I also like Songza because it's the greatest music app of all time.

9 / A POCKETKNIFE OR TWO

What works for MacGyver works for me. I do not go anywhere, except on a plane, without my Swiss Army Knife and Opinel.

10 / SMALL NOTEPAD

The speckled composition book is the original BlackBerry. Scribbling down travel-inspired notes, poems, and esoteric ramblings is one of the most beautiful parts of a road trip. Also, it's really handy if you run out of shit tickets.



SQUAW VALLEY

WITH J.T. HOLMES

/ By Ryan Dionne



With 3,600 skiable acres and a vertical drop of 2,850 feet, it's no wonder Squaw Valley attracts skiers like J.T. Holmes. The pro skier, BASE jumper, and speed rider, who grew up chasing Jonny Moseley, Tom Day, and others, knows every inch of Squaw. Here are some of his favorites.

1. One of the first places at Squaw to fill in each season, **Tamara's** has everything from open powder fields (stay skier's left for steeper lines) to nicely spaced trees and fun, optional cliff jumps. Follow the cat track left at the base of Olympic Lady and you'll find more powder on the lower slopes near the Exhibition lift.

2. From the top of the **Olympic Lady** lift, fade skier's right near the cliff area for a straightline-to-air chute with an incredibly smooth landing. Just shut down your speed quickly because the line gets steeper, with more trees. Enter the halfpipe-size gully after the trees and pop off the right wall for a great back-flip booter.

3. There's a reason this line is named after the legend. **McConkey's** is a proving ground for serious skiers. Its entrance is a puckering 68 degrees, and a fall could send you tumbling through the trees at the bottom. If you stick it and navigate the trees, you're lined up perfectly to choose a less stressful line through the Baby Fingers, which has smaller cliffs and chutes.

4. **Nose to Fingers** is Holmes's favorite line at Squaw. From the top of the KT-22 Express lift, follow the ridge that parallels

the chair until it steepens. From there, go right to pick your way through Coleman's area via lines like **Coleman's Alternate** and **Railroad**, which have tight chutes and mandatory airs. Or spot the clump of trees, which marks the takeoff for **Booger Rock**; then carry your speed through the flats to the **Fingers**. It's a series of steep chutes and spines with true Squallywood visibility (it's right under the chair). It's a popular zone, so pick your line and stick to it or risk being sloughed. You'll know if you ski it well from the chairlift reaction.

5. Shortly after KT-22 Express opens, check out **Headwall**, where you'll find Squaw's trademark buttery wind-buff. "It gets constant refills," Holmes says. His favorites are Headwall Face and Hogsback.

6. **Mainline Pocket** is rife with high-speed straightlines with long run-outs, technical descents with minor consequences, and endless fun. It's a zone, Holmes says, that's great no matter the conditions because of the terrain. To get there, traverse south from the Emigrant lift and follow the five-minute bootpack.

7. The big zone off the **Broken Arrow** lift has a mix of straightline possibilities, optional airs, and open spaces. It's a lesser-known, unintimidating zone that'll hand you 1,500 to 1,600 vertical feet of sunny fun. It still gets steep, sloughs, and has some cliff drops, but for the most part what you see is what you get. But ski it early before the sun has its way with it.

FYI

> On an epic powder day, Holmes always heads immediately for the **Nose to Fingers** zone. It's challenging, it's fun, and the conditions are good first thing.

> Squaw has a ski-in, ski-out Starbucks, but most locals go to **Wildflower Baking Company**. The chocolate-chip cookies go perfectly with the slow-drip coffee.

> For a healthy lunch, swing in for soup and grilled cheese at the local fave **Soupa**. If burgers and beer are on your menu, try **Rocker**.



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BEING HERE

TRAGIC ACCIDENTS HAPPEN. BUT SOMETIMES STAYING ALIVE IS A COMMITMENT YOU MAKE TO THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE YOU.

By Ryan Bass

There are three pictures. One is from this past spring of my 11-year-old son skinning up a mountain in the Rockies. The smile on his face as he looks toward the peak is an exquisite mix of peace and awe.

Another picture, from around the same time, is of my seven-year-old daughter in the starting gate of a GS racecourse in a fluorescent hippie-flower speed suit with an expression of absolute determination.

The third picture is from seven and a half years ago. My husband is in a hospital bed and I am next to him. He is in a cervical-thoracic brace with various broken body parts and a mild traumatic brain injury. It was before the social-media selfie craze but I did take a selfie of us. Proof that he was still here.

It was he who spent countless days with our kids on the slopes—bent over with them skiing between his legs, promising them hot chocolate—and got both of our little skiers to pictures one and two: the payoff he had worked for and his fatherly dream fulfilled. Kids who love to ski anytime and anywhere, and especially with him.

It was a gray winter afternoon in Colorado and I was getting ready to take our son to his first-ever theater movie when I got the call from the trauma unit. My husband had been helicoptered into the University of Utah ER. He was alive. He had suffered head trauma in a ski accident. *And no, sorry, but we can't provide you with any more details at this time. Please make arrangements to get here as soon as possible.*

Turns out it was the best-case scenario for head-butting a tree at 20-something miles per hour, which is what he did. He happened to be testing new helmets in what was then his role as editor of this magazine, and there was no way he would have survived without one. Our family loves helmets now.

Two months post-accident, we convinced the doctors to clear him for international travel so we could adopt our daughter, who was waiting for us on the other side of the world. It wasn't lost on me, when I saw our baby girl in his arms for the first time, that I almost had to do it all on my own—that trip, plus raising two kids.

That could-have-been is a nightmare I hope I'll never live, and now whenever I say goodbye to him as he leaves for the back-country, I never forget to say, "Don't die." Not that it will keep him, or anyone with him, safe, but I think I say it as a reminder to both of us that we signed up for this life—and family—together, and we both need to try our best to stay alive, whether that means eating our broccoli or deciding the snowpack feels unsafe.

One of the things I love most about the father of my children is his sense of wonder and adventure and his unconquerable love of the outdoors. What I cherish most about his parenting, and that of all dads who wake up and get their kids outside on Saturdays and Sundays, is that he is here. He may be tossing a lacrosse ball with the kids or hiking with them somewhere high up on a peak, but in the end it's his presence that counts.

I want the fourth picture to be the four of us in 30 years—alive, and as intact as possible. ♦

Ryan Bass lives in Carbondale, Colorado, with her husband, two kids, a tiny dog, and a lot of helmets.



WE SIGNED UP FOR THIS LIFE—AND FAMILY—TOGETHER, AND WE BOTH NEED TO TRY OUR BEST TO STAY ALIVE, WHETHER THAT MEANS EATING OUR BROCCOLI OR DECIDING THE SNOWPACK FEELS UNSAFE.



Sam Bass skis Mount Toll in Colorado's Indian Peaks.

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FIRST-DESCENT ESSENTIALS

GEAR THIS GUY BETS HIS LIFE ON.



WITH COLTER HINCHLIFFE

Aspen, Colorado's Colter Hinchliffe was part of the team that skied the north face of 14,130-foot Capitol Peak this past June in what Chris Davenport called "the raddest first descent done in Colorado in the last few years." This is the gear he used for the nine-hour approach and three-hour ski and climb down.

1/ SKIS LINE SICK DAY TOURIST "It's dependable when terrain is steep and exposed. Plus, it's lightweight, which helps when I'm carrying it for 18 hours." At the final rappel, Hinchliffe fumbled his ski and it soared over a 400-foot cliff. Hence the route's moniker, Peg Leg. "It wasn't too big of a deal. I was already on the rope and the terrain below was chill."

2/ BINDING MARKER KINGPIN "It's burly and light. The hinge point in the toe saves a ton of energy while you skin, and the heel piece is the most bomber of any tech binding ever made."

3/ BEACON, PROBE, SHOVEL BCA TRACKER 3, BCA STEALTH 270, BCA B-2 EXT "I love my Tracker 3. It's easy to use, and handles multiple burials well. I use my probe for more than avy situations, testing snow depths in landing zones and the conditions of steep lines like Capitol. I use the shovel almost everyday. I like the B-2 Ext because of its large metal blade and extendable handle."

4/ HARD GEAR "We couldn't have pulled off the mission without everything we

brought. The crampons and ice ax were crucial, and there is no way we would have had anything resembling an anchor without the large lengths of webbing, carabiners, snow pickets, and rock gear."

5/ BOOTS DALBELLO LUPO "It's not a flimsy tech boot; it's bomber and skis well. And the tech inserts and walk mode make the boot great for the way up. I hike miles on dirt, skin for miles, and ski hard with them."

6/ BACKPACK BCA STASH 30 "It's great. The avy gear has its own pocket, out of the way when I don't need it and not tangled if I do. Also, I can run the cord from the radio to my mike through the shoulder strap so I can be in contact without having to take my bag off."

7/ RADIO BCA LINK "I always have it, and a spare in case my partner doesn't. The battery lasts all day, and the mike has five programmable channels you can toggle through. Communication can really help your day."

8/ SKINS LINE SNAKESKINS "Line just came out with skins, and I ended up loving them. They're 70

percent mohair and very lightweight with great purchase."

9/ OUTERWEAR TREW GEAR TREWTH BIB AND COSMIC JACKET

"Trew makes the best outerwear on the planet. The bib is great—no waist constriction and massive ventilation down each leg. The Cosmic is technical but simple, packs small, and looks good."

10/ BASELAYER MONS ROYALE MONSIE

"I'm able to control my temperature with the front zipper and wool hood. Also, easy front and back access for No. 1s and No. 2s."

11/ GLOVES HESTRA HENRIK PRO MODEL GLOVE AND MITT

"Wet gloves are the worst. I bring a thin pair, maybe two, for the way up and a full leather glove and mitt for when I am handling snowy gear and shredding back down."

12/ DRINK

"I swear by my SteriPen on long missions. Water is heavy and I like to carry as little as possible. I'll find running water and hit it with the SteriPen, which weighs almost nothing."



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MOUNTAIN GUIDE

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**If you like piña coladas and getting caught in the rain, somebody somewhere probably wants to date you.*



CONTRIBUTORS

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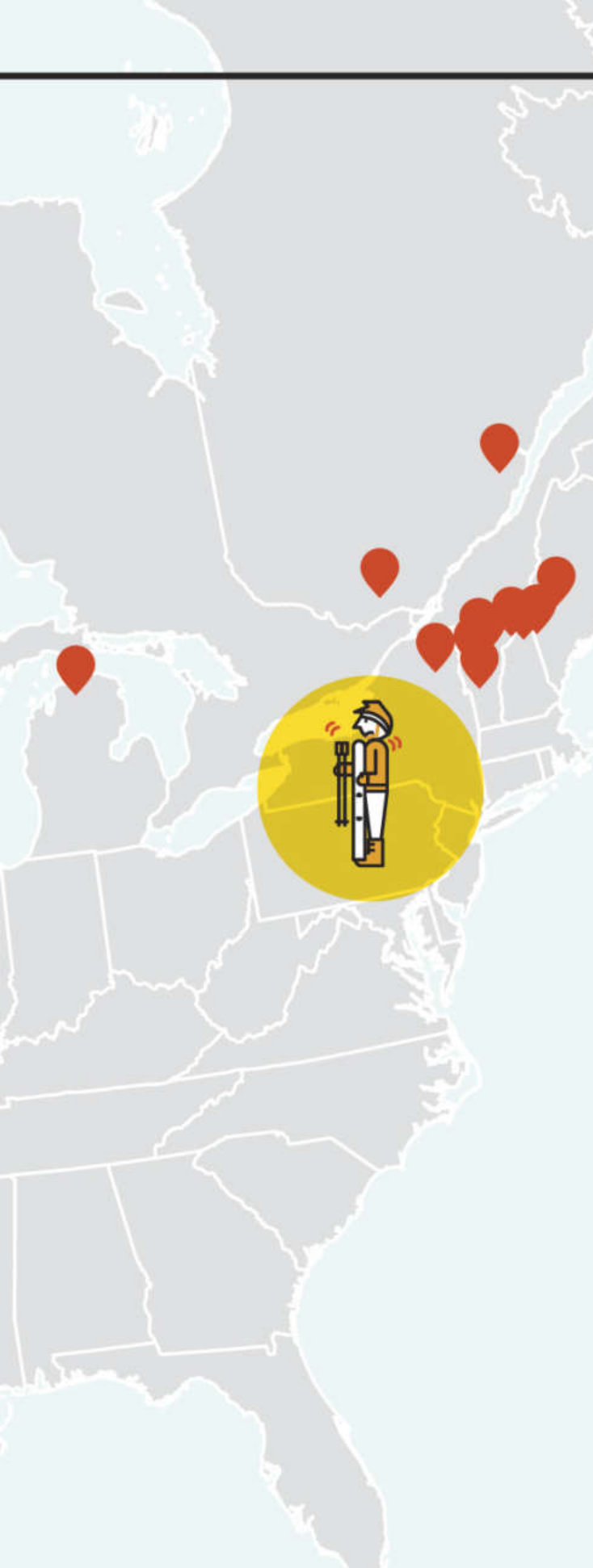
Crystal Sagan

Doug Schnitzspahn

*Eric Balken, Alta,
Utah, backcountry.*

**RESORT AWARD**

SKI CARRY BY REGION



ROCKIES NORTH 46

MONTANA / Snow ghosts, blue-light weather specials, and terrain to amaze your balls.

IDAHO / Ssshhh...it's a secret.

WYOMING / Hippie jams, '80s rock songs, trucker-hat vibes, and granny panties.

ROCKIES SOUTH 48

COLORADO / The bro-iest bros of brodom, steamy smells, dance fights, and the Olsen twins...bro!

UTAH / Shower windows, Interlodge, the Epic-est traverse, and meatloaf better than your mom's.

NEW MEXICO / More than just green chile and flowers resembling lady parts.

FAR WEST 54

NEVADA / Yes, there's skiing here...and vajazzling. Exposed hazards ahead.

CALIFORNIA / Mother Nature—you dick! Plus off-the-Richter stoke, love lost, and atonement.

WASHINGTON / Vape pens, snowboarder acceptance, and the return of the daffy.

OREGON / Push-ups, \$2 bills, and Bloody Marys.

WESTERN CANADA 60

B.C., ALBERTA / Mullets, jean jackets, grizzled locals, french fries and gravy, chaps, and The Terminator.

EAST 62

MAINE / Bumper-sticker pride, snowmaking firepower, fog, and snow that sucks 'til it's awesome.

VERMONT / Bleary eyes, perfectly worn outerwear, peewee hockey moms, and Mikaela Shiffrin's high school angst.

NEW HAMPSHIRE / Government oversight and Ketchup and Mustard.

NEW YORK / Candlelit Olympic ambience, microbrews, and sexy backsides.

QUEBEC / Salt water, legit-ness, and cute French Canadian acrobats.

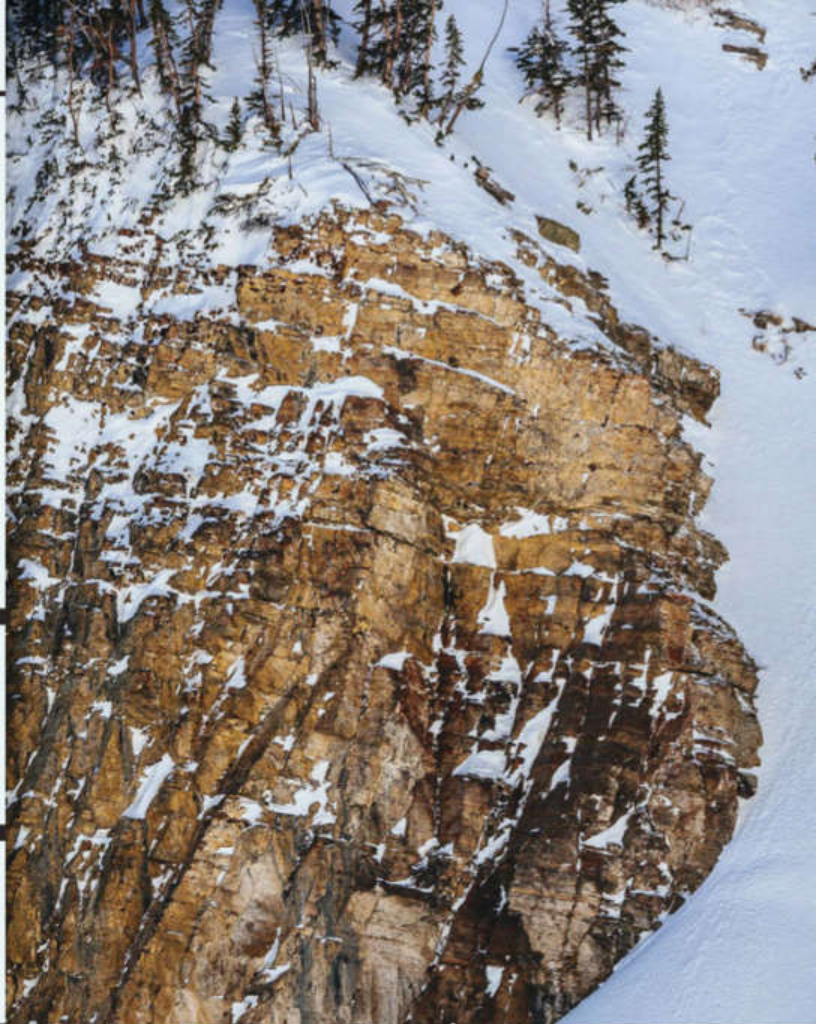
MIDWEST 66

MICHIGAN / Real-deal pow skiing, Donny Osmond's teeth, wave simulators, and "No Beginners Allowed!"

MINNESOTA / Deep fried cheese, ass-whacking, casseroles, fart water, and Lindsey Vonn's relationship with gravy.

ROCKIES NORTH

MONTANA, WYOMING, IDAHO. WHERE THE POW IS AS DRY AS STYROFOAM, THE ELK OUTNUMBER THE HUMANS, AND THE SUN IS ALWAYS SHINING... EXCEPT, OF COURSE, WHEN IT'S NUKING.



► **Best View Of Justin Timberlake's House** BIG SKY / MONT.

The terrain is amazeballs—Headwaters, A-Zs, the Big, North Summit Snowfields—but we always find ourselves hunkered in the willows near the Yellowstone Club, where J.T.'s pad beckons with laser beams and security cams. ("Yes, your honor. We know what's in the box. We just wanted to say thank you.")

► **Best Little Brother** BRIDGER BOWL / MONT.

Big Sky might win the popularity contest, but Bozeman's Bridger Bowl is the cool kid on the fringe. It has bigger powder dumps—look for the blue storm-alert light atop Bozeman's Baxter Hotel—and lift tickets for half the price. Ride up Schlasman's double and head in any direction for mouthfuls of that cold, delicious smoke.

► **Spookiest Summit** WHITEFISH MOUNTAIN RESORT / MONT.

Some of the best snow ghosts in North America haunt the summit of Whitefish Mountain Resort. Super-cooled moist air or fog from Whitefish Lake freezes—technically, into rime—when it hits branches, lift towers, or even skiers if they stand still long enough. Ride Chair 1, then head for the huge expert pod of Hellroaring Basin or follow Inspiration and drop skier's right into the open steeps of Big Face. The rime can build up to a ton or more on a single tree because the local firs are so flexible, following a bend-don't-break rule.

► **Best Bloodies** SNOWBOWL / MONT.

This tiny, three-lift resort just outside Missoula isn't famous for anything at all. But bartender Garland Davis at Last Run Inn makes a damn good Bloody Mary.



BEST STUFF WE CAN'T TELL YOU BRUNDAGE / ID.

We want to tell you that McCall, Idaho, is the real deal, the last great ski town. And that Brundage boasts stashes long after a storm in spots like Hidden Valley, which is not labeled on the map. We want to tell you about the cat-skiing operation that accesses 19,000 acres of untracked. We want to tell you about something called Naughty Girl. But the locals really don't want us to. Maybe you should buy one of them a beer at Salmon River Brewery and then keep your mouth shut.



► Lynyrd Skynyrd's Last Stand

JACKSON HOLE / WYO.

The Jackson Hole Tram ops hold you hostage for 15 whole minutes. Which could mean back-to-back god-awful '80s rock songs—"Ooooo that smell... Can't you smell that smell?"—or, more likely, a single meandering hippie jam that reminds you why you quit doing drugs. But then again, you are about to ski 4,139 feet of glittering pow, so we suppose "Ain't life grand..." might just fly.

► Redneckiest Pow Zone

GRAND TARGHEE / WYO.

Ain't no Four Seasons in these parts. Forty-two miles from Jackson, Grand Targhee's got a dirt-under-the-fingernails vibe as refreshing as anti-freeze. The nearest town has a drive-in movie theater called The Spud, whose sign in winter proclaims SHUT. And the lifties? Honest-to-goodness potato farmers. The General Store at the base sells beer, whiskey, and "sundries," which might

mean anything from granny panties to Red Man chew.

► Best B.C. Pow Outside B.C.

SELKIRKS / ID.

When the clouds part, which isn't that often, you get that fake-looking fairyland view—shimmering, freakishly deep Lake Pend Oreille in the middle distance; more snow-clad mountainscape beyond. The rest of the time, it snows like hell in the American Selkirks. Except last winter, which can just go fuck itself.

► Best Ski Town

KETCHUM / ID.

Ketchum puts the "town" in ski town. Aspen? Awesome, but you gotta be in the mood. Sun Valley doesn't get enough snow, dammit, and has its share of nobs for sure, but also lots of bro-bras who aren't all bro-brah, and just enough of a redneck varnished-knotty-pine, unironic-trucker-hat vibe to keep it real. Grumpy's, the Cellar, the Pio, the Casbah (er, Casino)... Just good people, good times.



CLOCKWISE: Hadley Hammer drops a monster air in the Jackson backcountry after a record-breaking 100-inch dump; Main Street, Ketchum; Zak Anderson airs a pillow line in the First Creek area at Whitefish; Alex Taran hikes Big Sky.

ROCKIES SOUTH

COLORADO, UTAH, NEW MEXICO. PERSECUTED MORMONS, ARTISTS WHO PAINTED “FLOWERS,” AND FUR-BOOTED CELEBRITIES HAVE ONE THING IN COMMON: THEY SETTLED IN A DAMN FINE PLACE FOR SKIING. DOWN SOUTH, THE ROCKIES ARE EASIER TO ACCESS. JUST WAIT FOR THE STORM, BOOK A TICKET, AND GO EAT POW.

► Best Overall

ASPEN / COLO.

Aspen's famous for a lot of things, including, inexplicably, the Olsen twins. But the marvel is, when it snows, the beautiful people go shopping. Which makes this town awesome for everyone. Except for people who hate having fun. Those guys should just keep snowshoeing.

► Most Brobunt Swearable Moments

TELLURIDE / COLO.

The San Juans are the gem of Colorado, and there's no better place to experience them than Telluride. From the views atop See Forever, to the inbounds technical steep off 13,320-foot Palmyra Peak, to the seemingly choreographed dance fights at the Buck, this place inspires a mantra of “Holy shit.” Take your kids out of school

and go; they'll return with much richer vocabularies.

► Best Place for Nighttime Athletics

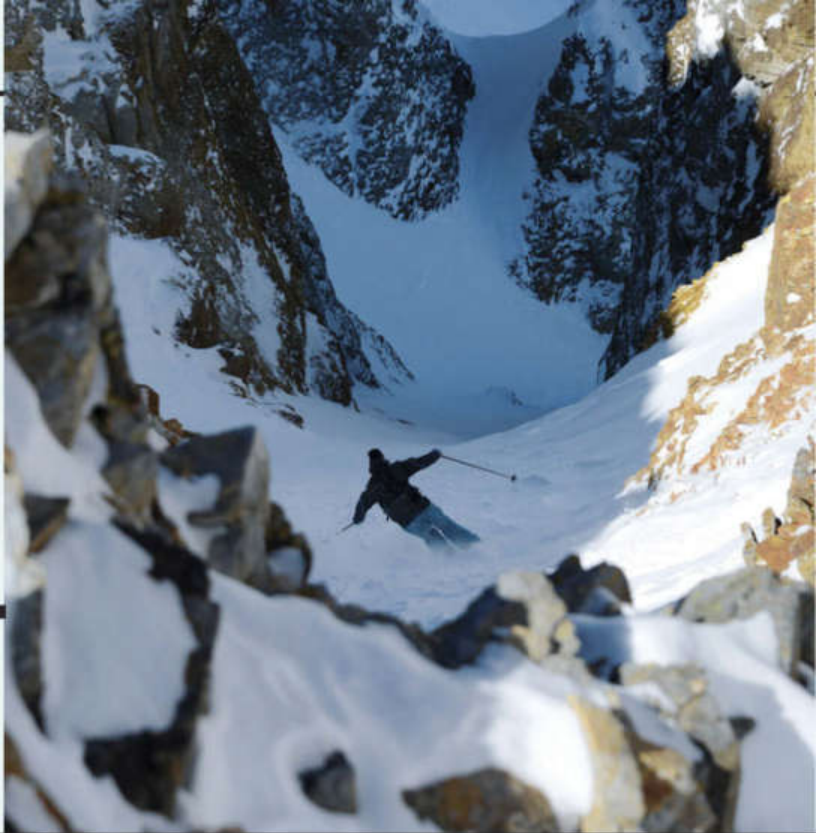
VAIL / COLO.

Foosball at The George, Vail's best basement dive bar, is just plain awesome. You'll get used to the smell—sweaty, steamy, boozy—and get into your fat-burning zone after a couple rounds. Just beware of taking water breaks on the nearby lounge chairs. You have no idea what those cushions have been through.

► Perfect Panorama

WINTER PARK / COLO.

Atop Mary Jane's Parsenn Bowl, you're looking at 360 degrees of perfect pow. There's Longs Peak in the distance. Rocky Mountain National Park over yonder. Now if you can just keep that damn thumb out of the way...



MANLIEST PARKING LOT

SILVERTON / COLO.

Silverton has the best Alaskan terrain this side of Alaska. But nothing is gnarlier than its parking lot. It's a sea of men with beards so thick and coarse, they look like they could scrape the skin off a beaver. (Wait, we mean a real beaver. You know, the beard a beaver trapper would have if beaver trapping were still a thing.)

► Most Authentic

ARAPAHOE BASIN / COLO.

Enough with the faux-Bavarian villages. Give us cylindrical meat, canned beer, and A-Basin's dirt parking lot any day. The terrain is the real deal—hit the chutes off Zuma Cornice, the classic Alleys off Pali, and of course the hike-to East Wall when it's open.

► Best Free Snowcat

COPPER MOUNTAIN / COLO.

Copper is underappreciated in general, but criminally so when it comes to the free snowcat that climbs Tucker Mountain. Catch it at the base of the Mountain Chief and crush the pow in Copper Bowl, Fremont Glades, The Taco, and The Nacho without expending either energy or dough.

Now go appreciate. Because next season, the snowcat will likely be replaced by a new lift.

► Most Enticing Reason to Play Possum

BRECKENRIDGE / COLO.

The gales at Breck can peel your face off. They can also blast snow crystals into Whale's Tale, Lake Chutes, and Beyond Bowl, making for good turns if you can stand it. No matter. The après warmth of Oscar's on Main Street awaits, with soft lamb tacos and Delirium Tremens on tap.

► Grossest Misnomer

STEAMBOAT / COLO.

Shit on a Shingle at Steamboat's Paramount Café is

actually corned-beef hash on toast, smothered in an amazing elk-sausage gravy. It's the best breakfast in town. Also try the house-made buttermilk biscuits or the chilaquiles. You really can't go wrong.

► Best Reason to Check Your Beneficiaries

CRESTED BUTTE / COLO.

Rambo is one of the steepest, perhaps even the steepest, cut run in North America. It's a 55-degree pitch that is at least fairly short (just under 1,000 vert). Make a run down Phoenix or Spellbound bowl first to scope your line. And if you're still feeling good after Rambo, head out to Body Bag and Dead End Chutes for a steeps hat

trick, and then go celebrate the fact that you're still in one piece.

► Best Pow Cow

WOLF CREEK / COLO.

Wolf Creek's tremendous endowment of snow—430 organic, grass-fed, hormone-free annual inches—starts early and keeps giving all season. Hop the Alberta lift early and hike the Knife Ridge for short, heart-pounding descents.

CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW:

Sven Brunso gets a few feet deep in classic Wolf Creek blower; the base "lodge" at Silverton; Seth Morrison drops into the Illusion Couloir south of Telluride on Sheep Mountain.

10 WAYS TO SPOT A COLO-RAD-BRO

1 / Obnoxious recycling. "My shoes are made from plastic bottles which were made from free-range cow feces."

2 / Toyota Tacoma, complete with plywood storage drawers, sleeping platform, prayer flags, and New England plates.

3 / A CrossFit T-shirt, made from bamboo fibers and the skin of the weak, with mountains on it. "Gluten-free paleo abs all day, bro!"

4 / No matter the conditions, it's 120 millimeters underfoot.

5 / In liftlines, he sports Whippets and Dynafit bindings because "You never know, duuuuuude!"

6 / Whether it's a question or not, every utterance sounds like a question.

7 / Deadmau5, Wu Tang, and Old Crow, all on one playlist.

8 / Flannel in winter, plaid in summer, shirtless at the festival, tanks whenever possible.

9 / Flat-brimmed trucker hats, pearl-snap cowboy shirts, and lightly stained Carhartts at weddings. And black or camo Crocs. Don't forget to look for the Crocs.

10 / He's told you.



ROCKIES SOUTH CONTINUED



Carlo Travarelli is not taking in the bluebird views of Mount Superior. He's shredding the 40 inches that fell on Snowbird's Mount Baldy.

► Most Awesome Mix of Concrete and Water

SNOWBIRD / UTAH

Snowbird's architecture (think Soviet bunkers with a Persian-rug problem) is as far from the ersatz Alpine style as Vail is from the actual Alps. And we love it. The vaguely institutional smell, the confusing layouts, and, yes, even the kinky shower windows in the Cliff Lodge. It's all especially appealing during Interlodge, when you're stuck on a barstool at the Aerie watching curtains of huge flakes drift down.

► Most Hilarious Sandwich

SNOWBIRD / UTAH

It doesn't matter what the giant Regulator Johnson at General Gritts deli has in it (turkey, basil, balsamic). Just put it in your mouth. See? It never gets old.

► Weirdest Business Model Ever

POWDER MOUNTAIN / UTAH

We'd explain Pow Mow's corporate culture if we could...but all we can muster is that it's some kind of utopian visionary thing run by "change makers" who want to catalyze personal and collective growth. Whatever. We just want to ski its 500 annual inches of airy Utah fluff. Utopia, indeed.

► Most Epic Traverse

CANYONS RESORT / UTAH

You could spend a week traveling sideways across Canyons' sprawling 4,000 acres. Not that we'd recommend it—lap the Ninety-Nine 90 lift instead. And now that it's linked up with Vail-owned Park City Mountain Resort, traversing possibilities are getting even...Epic-er.

► Most Ski-lebrity Sightings

ALTA / UTAH

Fanboying out over the most recently dropped rope? Try to keep it in your pants at Alta, where there's a pretty solid chance that Sage or Johnny Collinson or whomever you just watched will sit down next to you on the Wildcat double.

► Best Place to Buck the No-Friends Rule

SOLITUDE MOUNTAIN RESORT / UTAH

A powder day at Solitude looks like this: Sleep in. Eat breakfast. Ski with slow friends if you want. There's no need to rush for first tracks on a vacant mountain. Finish up the day down the road at Silver Fork Lodge. Sorry, Mom, their meatloaf is better.

► Best Reason to Get Over Hating Vail

PARK CITY MOUNTAIN RESORT / UTAH

Yes, the Evil Empire is taking over the world. And yes, it will make PCMR a better place to ski. For starters, a gondola up Iron Mountain opens up new expert pitches. It also connects to Canyons, making the biggest resort in America. Plus new lifts, a better restaurant, better parking, and cheaper passes. More crowds? We'll see, but so far the Dark Side seems to have its perks.

► Most Unexpected Views

DEER VALLEY / UTAH

It ain't Tahoe, but the panoramas of the Jordanelle Reservoir from the top of Deer Valley's Mayflower and Sultan lifts on Bald Mountain come pretty close. And you thought you came here for the salad bar.

BECAUSE SKIING MATTERS

Stöckli skis are built in days, not minutes. Stockli engineers handle each pair in 63 unique processes. Our unique glue system combines with an elastic powder to allow for increased elasticity when the ski bends. This technology plays a key role in Stöckli's on snow behavior – stability. All materials are allowed to cure in climate-controlled rooms. The presses that bond the skis allow engineers to modify both pressure and temperature at different areas on the ski. Each pair of Stöckli skis are put through a 25 step finishing process to provide the skier with a premium on snow experience.

Ski Legend: SCOT SCHMIDT

PHOTO: TONY DEMIN

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ROCKIES SOUTH CONTINUED



► Best Back Side SNOWBASIN / UTAH

Despite garnering some name recognition during the 2002 Olympics, Snowbasin remains under the radar compared to the big dogs in the Cottonwoods and Park City. That means its steep terrain (hit the John Paul Express lift) and white goodness (400 inches per year) are all there for you and the three other people from SLC who drove up for the day. But the real must-do is one beast of a backcountry run out the back of the resort—the Banana Chute, a 5,000-vert thrill ride that spits you out in Ogden.

► Most Controversial Terrain Expansion TAOS / N.M.

Taos raised hackles and cheers last year when it put a lift up to previously hike-only 12,450 foot Kachina Peak. The resort is pushing it even farther this year, into the steep, treed Wild West Glade. Debate over the most diplomatic of dishes: Christmas chile.

TOP: Jared Allen airs it out at Snowbasin. BOTTOM: Patrol works on Taos's Kachina Peak.



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FAR WEST

CALIFORNIA. NEVADA. THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST.
THESE PLACES EPITOMIZE FEAST OR FAMINE.
BUT WHEN IT'S ON, THE GETTING IS SO, SO GOOD.
AND THEY'RE OVERDUE.

► Best Place to Get High MT. ROSE / NEV.

In addition to being the closest skiing to the Biggest Little City in America—Reno, Nevada—Mt. Rose boasts the highest base elevation in the Tahoe area. When storms come in warm and snow lines are high in the Chutes, Mt. Rose's iconic expert terrain still gets plastered with the white stuff.

► Same-Day Skiing and Vasectomy Reversals LAS VEGAS SKI AND SNOW-BOARD RESORT / NEV.

Vegas is the weirdest place on earth. Billboards for private-part surgery (vagioplasty!), Liberace museums, water slides through shark tanks... and a ski area one hour from the strip. It has three lifts and gets 240 inches of snow a year. We'd tell you more, but we've never actually been skiing there. We can, however, attest to the après. Which is all-time.

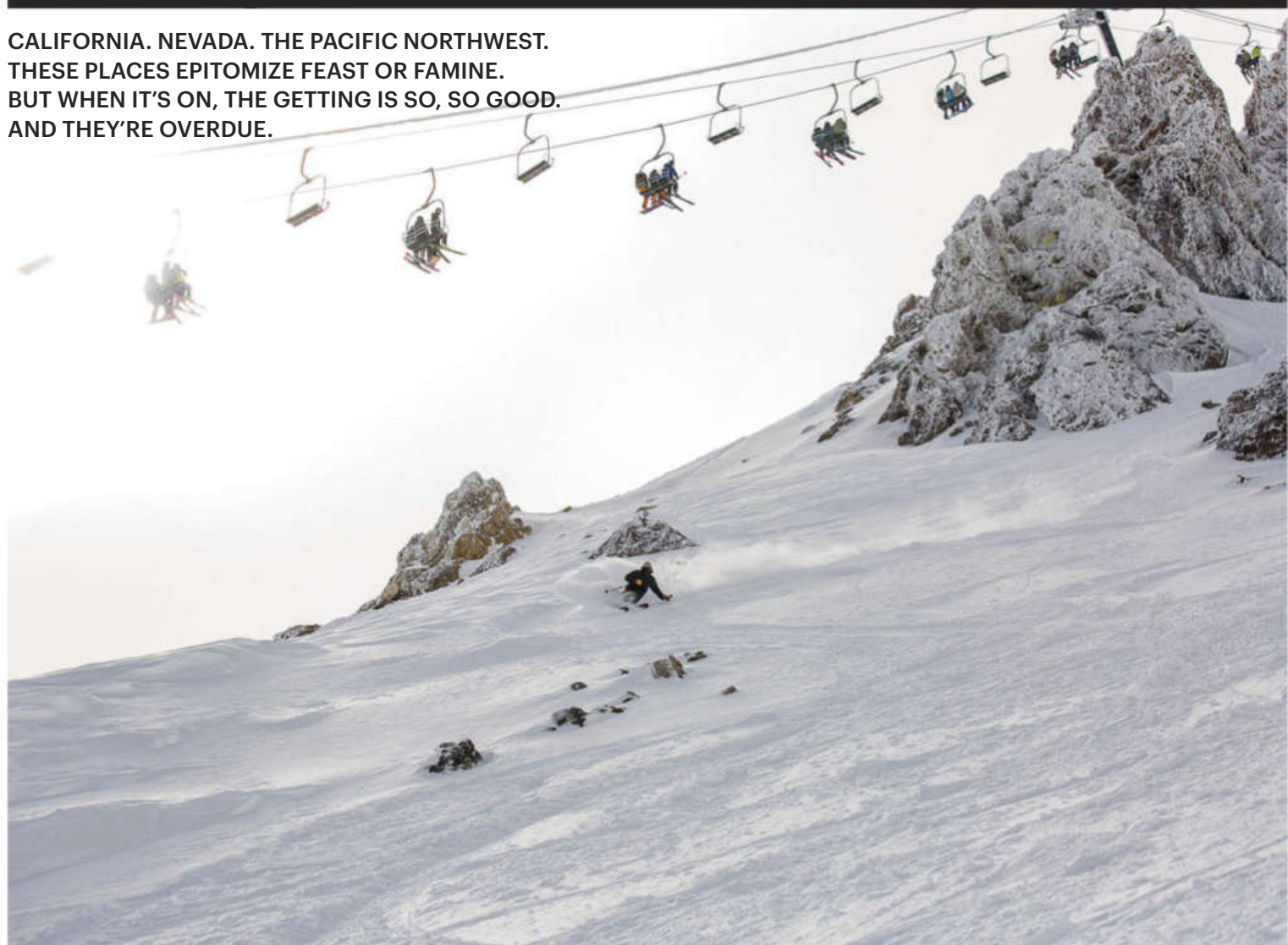
► Most Stoked PR Guy KIRKWOOD / CALI.

Coop Cooper is Kirkwood's brand manager, but his title should really be director of stoke. Whether he's got a cup o' joe or a glass o' red in hand,

his infectious enthusiasm, positivity, and love of skiing have kept stoke levels pinned at 11 around Kirkwood for years. Check him out on Facebook. It's pretty epic.

► Most Divisive Development Plans SQUAW VALLEY / CALI.

This extreme-skiing mecca is still known for its hardcore terrain and ski community. Recently, however, Squaw is becoming known for its ambitious development plans, which include an expanded village and a base-to-base gondola with Alpine Meadows, which it owns. These plans have incensed locals and spawned groups like Incorporate Olympic Valley, Keep Squaw True, and Friends of Alpine Meadows.



RIGHT: Matt Reardon cliff dives at Alpine Meadows. LEFT: Chris Benchetler at Mammoth.

A LETTER TO MY LOST TAHOE LOVE

By Jeremy Benson

My dearest Winter,

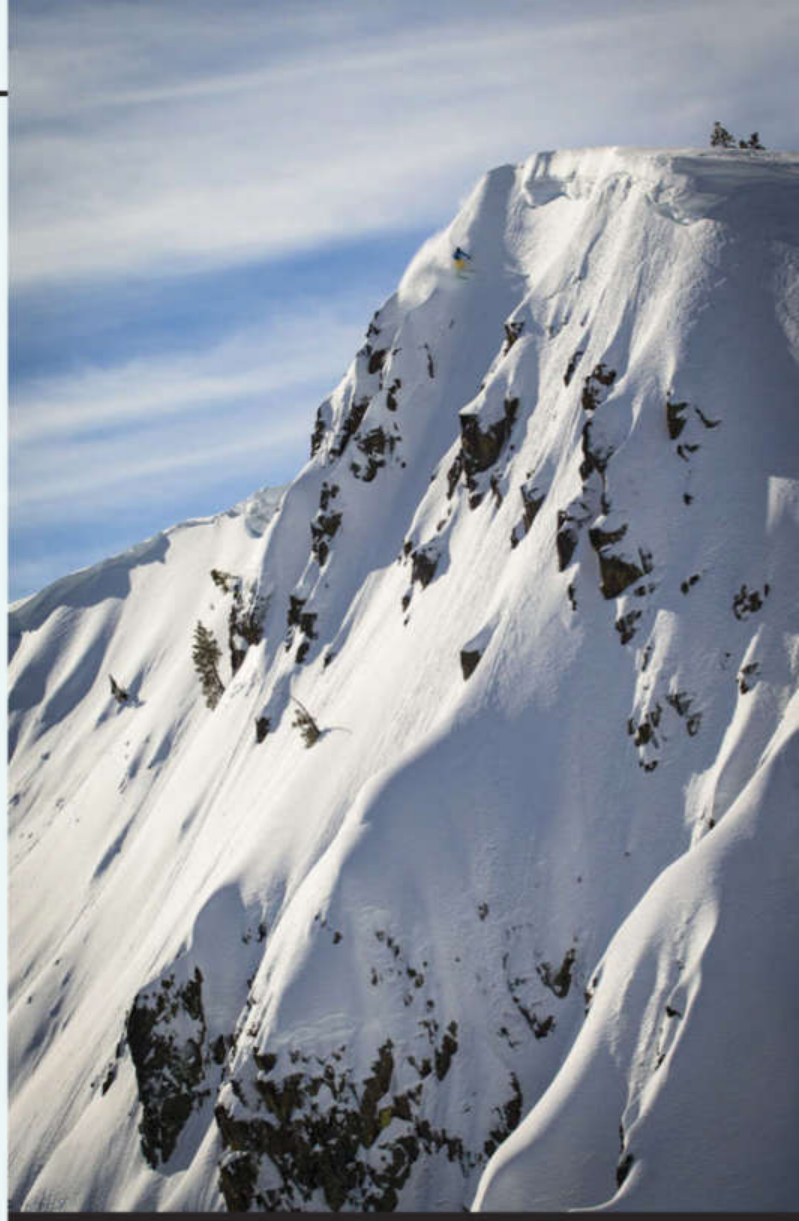
It's been a while, four years but who's counting, since we've truly been together. That's not to say you've completely shut me out of your life, but it's obvious you don't love me the way you used to. Sure, you've shown your face a bit in that time, but your visits have been short and always leave me wanting more. Dust on crust again. I need more than that, baby, and you know I can't stand the rain! I truly cherish the fun times we've had these last few years, but it's hard for me because I think we're really good together. I don't know, I guess I'm just thinking about the way things used to be, when we would laugh and play for months on end. It's crazy too, because it all started so innocently. We were young, and our casual relationship slowly grew into the wildest and most passionate love affair of my life. I didn't realize I'd base my entire existence around trying to be with you, but that's exactly what happened. I became addicted to you and now I'm suffering through painful withdrawals.

I heard through the grapevine that you've been spending lots of time with Jackson. My road trip last January only confirmed this rumor—the Tram line so long, the backcountry parking lots overflowing with locals and other desirous lovers you'd forsaken. Everyone seemed so happy. "Winter is here all the time," they said. "The last few years have just been so great." I'll admit, seeing you there did make me happy—it felt so good to feel your soft kiss of cold powder on my cheeks and taste it on my lips, but it made me miss you even more. I've chased you far and wide, from Alaska to B.C., emptying my wallet just to be with you, the encounters brief and fleeting, making me long for the times when you were here and I didn't have to pursue you.

I didn't really want to start spending more time with Summer, but you left me no choice. I don't want to be alone and the less you're around, the more time she's been spending here. It's only natural. She's great, she really is, but no matter how happy we seem, my mind always drifts back to thoughts of you and how you make me feel like no one else can. I've tried hard not to give up, but this year I finally told myself that I was "over it." But I know I'm just kidding myself. My life's just not the same without you. I'm yours and I always will be. So I guess I'll just keep doing what I've been doing, hoping with all my might that someday you'll come back to stay.

I love you, I miss you, and I want you back...

—Jeremy



► **Best Place to Hike** **ALPINE MEADOWS / CALI.**

You access the majority of Alpine's best terrain by hiking the ridges extending from the top of Summit chair in any of three directions. Those willing to earn their inbounds turns will find fresh snow until the closing bell on powder days and an almost backcountry feel in the bowls that drop off the Pacific Crest. Backcountry-savvy skiers will revel in the resort's open-boundary policy, which allows easy access to even more incredible terrain.

► **Best Place to Get Buffed** **MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN / CALI.**

Storms that slam into the Sierra, and particularly Mammoth, are

typically accompanied by very strong winds. After unleashing their fury, they leave a smooth, chalky, wind-buffed paradise.

► **Best Buffet** **SIERRA-AT-TAHOE / CALI.**

Huckleberry Canyon's five gates access a cornucopia of trees, cornices, pillows, cliffs, and aprons of pure pow. (When there is pow, that is.) It's uncontrolled, so bring avy gear and know-how.

► **Most Sumptuous** **Eye Candy** **HOMEWOOD / CALI.**

Given the mellow terrain and laid-back vibe, it's the views that make the Homewood experience. They're gorgeous, best enjoyed while trenching fresh cord on Hidden Vein.

FAR WEST CONTINUED

► Best Place to Pass the Vape

CRYSTAL MOUNTAIN / WASH.

You've got nine minutes and 39 seconds to kill in the Rainier gondie, which is located in Washington, where weed is legal. Just sayin'.

► Best Urban Commute

ALPENTAL / WASH.

Alpental is only 45 minutes up the road from Seattle. Don't be fooled by its benign cousins on Snoqualmie Pass; this place delivers big-time terrain, including easy-access, expansive backcountry (Great Scott Traverse) that goes as big as you want to take it. As for the snow, it's sort of like the Seattle music scene: Sometimes it's the stuff of legend; others, it's raw and crunchy and leaves you feeling shaky.

► Friendliest Rats

STEVENS PASS / WASH.

No one's too cool for school

at the Stevens Pass terrain park. There the riders—on one plank or two—coexist in park-sesh harmony. Which is awesome because spread eagles are always better in tandem.

► Best Reason to Buy a Round

MT. BAKER / WASH.

This is the *She's All That* of mountains, with a slightly frumpy front that belies its tight, technical tree lines, pillow drops, and powder stashes. And that's before you even get into the accessible backcountry (warning: it can also be fairly high-consequence). But you're probably not going to find all the goods on your own, and the mountain is riddled with sneaky cliffs and ski-sucking gullies. So find yourself a local friend.

TOP: KC Deane gets a face full at Mt. Bachelor. BOTTOM: Bobby Brown styles out Stevens Pass.



LATEST UNTRACKED

MT. BACHELOR / ORE.

Bachie locals know that when that big storm system rolls in, you shouldn't get up early to wait in line at Pine Marten with the mob. Sleep in, get a Bloody Mary at the D&D, and roll up just in time for the Northwest Express to open.



PURE SOLITUDE.



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800-748-4754 skisolitude.com



FAR WEST CONTINUED



ALL-TIME FAVES IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

MILKSHAKES

A milkshake may be tough to screw up, but once you taste the creamy concoction served at the Huckleberry Inn at Mt. Hood's Government Camp, you'll realize how good it can really be.

PICKLED EGGS

Don't worry about how long they've been sitting in that jar. Pop into Naches Tavern in Greenwater, on the way to Crystal, and try one, ideally on the couch by the fireplace.

PIE

On the way to or from Crystal, stop in at Pie Goddess in Enumclaw for a hot slice of heaven.

**SKI-THEMED DIVE BAR
WHERE NO ONE INSIDE
HAS EVER BEEN SKIING**
The Ski Inn in Enumclaw is amazingly grungy.

STEEPS

The rocky chutes and protected tree runs off the Northway lift at Crystal used to be a purely backcountry zone for locals. There's still plenty of fresh, though, and gates access a huge backcountry zone for those who have avy gear and know how to use it.

► Best Hero Run

**CRYSTAL MOUNTAIN /
WASH.**

In full view of the Northway lift, Glory Days is the place to make a spectacle of yourself. Drop Pennydawns on skier's right, or hit the knoll near the trees. Bring back that double daffy, baby.

**► Best Reason to
Resurrect the \$2 Bill**
MT. HOOD / ORE.

At Charlie's, \$2 gets you one whole Rainier Beer plus a prime seat for the local shenanigans. Just don't drop your pool cue. They'll make you drop and give 'em 10.

TOP: The sun does shine sometimes at Mt. Baker. Adam Ü inscribes his line. BOTTOM: Crystal's "ganjola."

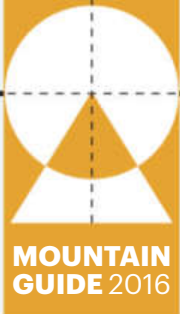


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MOUNTAIN
GUIDE 2016

WESTERN CANADA

BRITISH COLUMBIA, ALBERTA. WE. LOVE. YOU. WE LOVE YOUR PEOPLE, YOUR SNOW, YOUR RUGGED, GIANT, POW-CHOKED PEAKS. WE LOVE YOUR BLUE LIGHT AND MISTY RIVERS. HELL, WE EVEN LOVE YOUR HOCKEY HAIR. BUT EVEN SO, AIN'T NO WAY WE'RE CALLING THAT DOMEPIECE A "TOQUE."



► Best Flip-Cup Tourneys RED MOUNTAIN / B.C.

The locals at Red Mountain's Rafter's bar are actual locals, which is to say they have none of the bullshit "local" attitude you get at other hardcore resorts from trust-funders in trucker hats who moved from Connecticut two seasons ago. At Rafter's, you'll be elbow to elbow with young lifties, grizzled patrollers, and dudes in Carhartts pounding beer out of Solo cups to the sound of a cheering crowd.

► Best Hangover WHISTLER / B.C.

Oh, your head hurts this morning? Perhaps it's because you spent yesterday hiking Spanky's Ladder on the Blackcomb Glacier, getting all dehydrated, and then got brave and pitched into Corona bowl. And then you went straight into a pitcher of sake margaritas at the deservedly famous Sushi Village. Then you probably found some nice

Australians and went dancing, didn't you? You won't find much sympathy here. Cure yourself with a Caesar and some butt-clenching laps on Whistler's Peak chair.

► Most Unnecessary Heli Skiing REVELSTOKE / B.C.

Sure, you could go heli skiing in Revelstoke—Selkirk Tangiers will pick you up in the parking lot. Or you could cat ski, right outside the gates. Or you could just park yourself on the Stoke chair and lap the cliffy inbounds chutes of North Bowl.

► Best Onesies FERNIE / B.C.

Fernie represents that part of Canada that still listens to Rush and sports mullets. (Wait, that's not *all* of Canada?) And the rippers there couldn't care less that we just said so, because the resort also represents that part of Canada that gets dumped on with an average of 344 inches



FROM TOP: ERIC BERGER; BRUNO LONG;
COURTESY OF LAKE LOUISE



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Dave Gheriani explores Revelstoke's backcountry; Matty Richard throws some snow at Kicking Horse; Lake Louise's Stampede attracts lots of participants...just not necessarily lots of skiers.

per year and is so far from any major population center that no one fights for freshies. And if you really do want to show off your mullet (and that Descente one-piece you've been saving), head here on Retro Weekend and turn up the 2112.

► **Best Lodge Food**

WHITEWATER / B.C.

Who can say no to french fries, gravy, and cheese curds? What if you hipster it up and add teriyaki mushrooms? What if you get all green and use that nasty fry grease to power the snowcats on the hill? At Whittewater, the food at Fresh Tracks Cafe feels like you just wandered into food-truck heaven in Brooklyn, but don't worry. You'll work it off in the steep and deep.

► **Best Chinese Downhill**

LAKE LOUISE / ALBERTA

We reckon cowboys and cowgirls are probably good at most physical activities, especially if they do them wearing chaps. But when they converge on snow in Lake Louise's annual Ski Louise Stampede, it seems they've spent a little too much time wrasslin' bulls to pick up skiing's subtleties. Like turning. The carnage is spectacular. These folks are all heart.

► **Best Drunken History**

SUNSHINE VILLAGE / ALBERTA

Party like it's 1928 in the original Mad Trapper's Saloon in the Sunshine Village Lodge, which started regularly hosting skiers—and their old-school après parties—just a few years after it was built. The original structure is now the center of Sunshine nightlife, where overly friendly Canadians are eager to share history—and shot skis.



REALEST FANTASY

KICKING HORSE / B.C.

If you were to design a ski hill in your mind it might look something like Kicking Horse: a ring of steep, cliff-lined ridges named to make you feel more badass than you actually are ("You ski Terminator Peak today? Yeah, me too."), a non-resorty but still adorable ski town, endless backcountry complete with huts where you can post up for a few days, a shit-ton of snow, and friendly Canadians. If you want easy access and bustling nightlife you might want to get another dream. But if you can do without those, welcome to fantasyland.

EAST

NO NEED TO NAME CHECK—YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE. EAST COASTERS CAN SET AN EDGE ALL RIGHT, AND THEY ALSO KNOW HOW TO BE DAMN GRATEFUL WHEN THE SOFT STUFF FLIES. BELIEVE IT OR NOT, IT DOES HAPPEN HERE.



IGNATS MONTAGUE

► Best Early-Season Turns

SUNDAY RIVER / MAINE

We don't know whether to ridicule or admire people who want to ski in November, when it's dark and brown and depressing. But for those who insist, Sunday River puts out. When it's cold, the sheer snowmaking firepower shocks and awes. No wonder race teams from all over the East converge in Bethel.

► Best Monster Under the Bed

SMUGGLERS' NOTCH / VT.

Don't let the wholesome family image of Smuggs fool you. When it's not cookies-and-milk time over at Little Rascals, Mogul Mouse and Brucie Moose are sneaking into the woods off Sterling. They come back with bleary eyes and spruce bark on their breath. And the pokey Madonna 1 chair rewards the raddest of rippers handsomely for their patience (20 minutes and then some). First there's that view (sometimes actually visible). Then there's some of the most R-rated terrain in all of New England. Send the kids from the room.

► Highest Self-Esteem

MAD RIVER GLEN / VT.

Yes, Mad River skier, you are smarter, more soulful, and better than the rest of us, so good you don't need edges and so Zen you're content to hike for turns on frosty moss and wet leaves. Your apparel is old and grubby in just the right way, and...aw, hell, we're just jealous. Awesome mountain (Roland Palmedo had an eye, no?), zero crowds (thanks to lift capacity from another era), as real as it gets. We'd be snobs too. MRG, may your snow be natural and abundant.

► Best Ski-House Camaraderie

KILLINGTON / VT.

Don't tell us this town ain't got no heart. You just aren't getting invited to the right parties. Killington has a hardcore, 50-day-a-year, second-home scene that doesn't care if you think Kmart is crowded (which it hasn't been for years, unless you're dumb enough to ski on holidays). We've told you this before: The party starts in the K1 lot around midafternoon on sunny days; show up with some Headys and be nice.



BEST BUMPER-STICKER PRIDE

SUGARLOAF / MAINE

Sugarloaf's blue triangle. It's everywhere. On rusty Subarus and gleaming Beemers, from Boston to Bangor to the west stall of the men's bathroom at Skiing Magazine HQ, where a certain former editor-in-chief and 'Loaf founding-family member played some of his best video solitaire between moments of creative genius. Dude, we know you put it there. *That's* passion.

► Best Gaper Bait

JAY PEAK / VT.

It's almost as if by "ruining" Jay Peak they made it less crowded. Sure, the hotels are huge and fancy and full...but full of gaper families there for the water park or some peewee hockey tournament. So the slopes and famous Jay glades remain as untracked and beautifully lonesome as ever. Tabernac, what a lot of Quebecois. But if you can put up with all the Habs fans, the après scene is, if anything, better (i.e. existent) these days. And there's the poutine...

► Best Big Government

CANNON MOUNTAIN / N.H.

Last time we skied Cannon it was a thousand below and blowing a hundred, but clear and sunny, so we could see Lafayette, more dramatic than even the Rockpile. The vibe is perfect: state-run, low-budget, full of idiots like us who just want to ski. The historic Aerial Tramway (Ol' Ketchup & Mustard), reanimated Mittersill (beloved of bark eaters and now gate bashers alike), high-speed arcs on Upper Ravine (Sel's masterpiece): Taxpayers should be damn proud.

► **Best Ski Town**
LAKE PLACID / N.Y.

Hey, we're badass hardcore skiers and everything. But that doesn't mean we don't appreciate Lake Placid's charming, bustling, romantic, authentic lakeside village. We like candle-lit dining rooms, warm and noisy microbreweries, vintage brick storefronts, twinkling holiday lights, an Olympic vibe, and that beautiful alpenglow view of the sexy back side of Whiteface in the afternoon.

► **Best-Kept Secret**
Q BURKE MOUNTAIN / VT.

Despite frequent changes in ownership over the years (the most recent coming from Ary Quiros, hence the added "Q" in the name), Burke is a radical mountain with gnarly terrain that's far away from long liftlines and out-of-control Joe bags.

Upwards of two hours from popular Stowe and Sugarbush, this place offers a unique experience detached from the rest of the northern Vermont ski scene. It's also home to Burke Mountain Academy, where World Cup ripper Mikaela Shiffrin earned her high school diploma.

► **Best Range of Terrain**
STOWE / VT.

Nothing ruins planning a ski trip more than an argument over terrain preference. Mom wants the groomers while Dad wants the cliffs (or vice versa for the cool moms), but every mountain always seems to have just one of the two. Find it all at Stowe, from the lower-mountain corduroy to the upper-mountain chutes. Yeah, they have effin' chutes.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: 'Loaf pride in Telluride; kid stuff at Smuggs; Ian Forgays in the MRG backcountry.



EAST CONTINUED



► Best Urban Planning MONT-TREMBLANT / QUE.

Yes, Tremblant's a fake village purpose-built to make you feel like you're in Cham or Zermatt or some goddamned place. But it's irresistible. Bars and clubs and bistros full of cute French-Canadian girls. Open plazas connected by intimate alleys. You know... a vibrant village, crammed with fun, rowdy skiers who are as happy as you are to be skiing. Call it fake, but there's a sense of place that sure beats the cookie-cutter-condo ennui of most Eastern resorts.

► Best Whale Watching LE MASSIF / QUE.

Nobody's been to Le Massif

(it's an hour north of Quebec City). And nobody believes you when you tell them how cool it is. How can any "upside-down" ski area—where you park at the top and ski down—be legit? It's legit: 2,526 vertical feet of *rad* terrain. Big enough to host a FIS-sanctioned downhill. Great food (what did you expect?). Owned by a Cirque du Soleil co-founder. With a view of the friggin' ocean *right there*. (OK, St. Lawrence Seaway, but with real freighters and whales.) Massif's one problem: Salt air melts the snow too early.

TOP: The twinkling lights of Tremblant are real, even if the "village" is not. BOTTOM: Keith Macchione skins up Stowe's Haychute.



IN DEFENSE OF EASTERN SKIING

By Joe Cutts

I always rise to the defense of Eastern skiing. Especially when a bunch of smug Westerners are pissing me off. Most of the time they've never skied in the East. They just parrot, "It's cold, icy, and rainy."

But part of me wants to join in to celebrate the sheer shit-tiness of it. Because sometimes it's so bad it's funny, right? I've never skied in a trash bag, but I understand why someone would. We've all watched two months of snowpack wash away in 36 hours of January rain. We've seen storms drop a foot of fresh with an inch of rain on top. We've hurried to the hill post-nor'easter to find pow so ruined by wind it's barely skiable. We survived the Ice Storm.

Yeah, we know that sometimes it sucks. And we can say it. But you can't. Unless you've paid your dues by skiing the same manmade ribbon of snow with a few thousand of your closest friends. Or chipping the quarter-inch of ice off your windshield up in Lot 1 at Smuggs. Or skiing in a Sugarloaf fog that would be hard enough to see through if it weren't also freezing on your goggles.

Many things about Eastern skiing require no apologies. We've got history: Tuck's and the Taft Slalom; Andrea Mead and Barbara Ann; Gilbert's Hill and Nosedive. We've got proximity: You could ski Jay and Killington in the same day and never hit anything remotely resembling the soul-sucking traffic of I-70. We've got air: the rich sea-level variety. We can burn hardwood in our fireplaces. Our white-clapboard villages are authentic and charming.

And sometimes, more than people think, the skiing in the East is just plain awesome. Powder days happen, and we know what to do with them. The snow can be as good as it was just last winter, when it was better than anywhere out West.

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MIDWEST

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BUT YOU WON'T FIND MORE PASSION ANYWHERE.



► Best Owner/Operator MOUNT BOHEMIA / MICH.

"For guys who want groom-ing—screw that!" exults Lonie Gliberman, owner and operator of the Midwest's powder mecca. With its No Beginners Allowed policy, Boho is a unique no-frills adventure-skiing destination in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and Gliberman aims to keep it that way. He'll describe glading, terrain expansion, and the new cat op while he checks in rentals or stocks the pop machine. He's the most stoked owner in the biz and loves his Bohemians like family.

► Wettest Après BOYNE MOUNTAIN RESORT / MICH.

Boyne may not have a lot of terrain (850 acres), and one of its lifts dates back to the 1930s. But it has a wave simulator. Avalanche Bay Indoor Water-park, right there in the middle of the base area, boasts two acres of water slides, lazy rivers, and wave pools. Take that, Alaska.

► Best Chance to Hear Lindsey Vonn Speaking in Her Native Tongue AFTON ALPS / MINN.

Before the Blond Bomber was crushing the World Cup circuit she was cruising the land of the casserole. The Minnesota Maiden can be spotted at Vail Resorts' Midwestern hub, high-fiving local racers and destroying a healthy serving of hot dish. Her handlers have helped

her drop the dialect, but get her within sniffing distance of lutefisk and the long vowels start flowing like sausage gravy at Christmas.

► Best Deep-Fried Cheese Curds WILD MOUNTAIN / MINN.

What's better than springy, squeaky cheese? Like most things in life, the deep-fried version. Minnesota's family-owned Wild Mountain serves a perfect exemplar of this gooey delicacy. Cruise impeccable groomers with the kiddos, send your tenderloin in one of the best terrain parks in the state, chat it up with the friendly staff (chances are they're brothers, sisters, cousins, or in-laws of the owners), and then come on in for some tasty goodness.

► Best Use of Corporal Punishment BUCK HILL / MINN.

What to do with Buck Hill's 309 vertical feet of Midwest ice? Set some slalom gates and hire a crazy Austrian race coach. Legend has it that Erich Sailer glowers beside the course, and if your kid isn't skiing fast enough he will actually whack him on the ass with a gate as he goes by. *Hard.* Ask Lindsey. And the start ramp is two stories tall to max out the vert. Buck Hill, you rock.

The Midwest does have terrain parks. We'd like to see Lindsey jib in this one at Afton Alps.

ANGRY MIDWESTERNER'S RANT

By Paddy O'Connell

Ya know what's got me bubblin' more than freshly baked Tater Tot hot dish? The idea that the only place worth skiing is out West. Well, I gotta tell ya, bud, that's just bologna sausage. California hasn't seen snow in 400 years. Everybody in Colorado was too busy eating free-range, homegrown, gluten-free vegan quinoa salad to realize it didn't snow until May (what the hell is a friggin' quinoa anyhow?). The Pacific Northwest smells like Free Willy's blowhole and Utah smells like Donny Osmond's tooth enamel, and that is one toothy bastard. Montana and Wyoming—well, I just don't trust a state without a professional sports team of any kind. Seriously, what's the deal with that?

Meanwhile, us Midwestern skiers are lappin' 200-foot runs with smiles touching behind our ears. Oh, what's that you say? No snow or terrain here? Three words: Mount Bohemia, guy! While the West was high and dry last season, yours truly was slashin' 900 vert at the home of Midwest powder skiing. If you don't believe it that's just fine by me, bud. Enjoy all that wonderful, snowless terrain you got out there. You wouldn't be able to handle the Midwest anyhow. Not you cute little skin-and-bones veggies who eat nothin' but grass clippings and tree bark. Five seconds of real weather and you'd be crying into your kombucha, which by the way smells like fart water.

You got a problem with it, pal? Then come on over. I'll be shovelin' four feet of fresh off the patio, firin' up the grill, and eatin' cased meat after a day of Midwest face shots. Boom!

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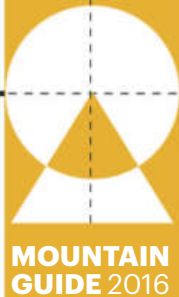
 December, 2014. Carson Hildebrandt, age 13, beats his dad
(and the camera) to first tracks below the peak on Upper Peel. Photo: Trent Bona

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► Sampler Platter

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current price was not released as of press time).

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YOU'VE HEARD
ABOUT THE SKIING AT
MOUNT BOHEMIA.**

BY TIM SOHN



Marcus Caston
getting some air in
Horseshoe Chutes.

U.P. EXTREME

STEVE ROWE SLICED THE AIR with his ski pole and pointed north toward the horizon, across a frozen landscape that looked like the edge of the known world. We stood atop Mount Bohemia on northern Michigan's remote Keweenaw Peninsula, surrounded on three sides by the vast expanse of Lake Superior. Rowe, Bohemia's lone full-time patroller, was giving me a tour.

"Out there you can see Isle Royale on a clear day," he said, nodding toward a point 60 miles off, closer to Canada than to us. Then he pivoted back toward the mountain, pointing east. "Over that way is Outer Limits and Middle Earth, but I think we should head to the north side."

He smiled, skated away, and ducked into some trees. I followed. It was a Friday in late February, sunny and cold, and I was already several runs into my first day at the place that boasts the Midwest's only extreme skiing.

The extraordinarily copper-rich Keweenaw juts sharply northeastward off Michigan's already remote Upper Peninsula. Bohemia is its highest point, and thanks to a strong lake effect, it's blessed annually with 300 inches of fluffy powder on its 900 feet of vertical. "It's Eastern-type terrain with Western-type snow," Rowe had told me on the lift. "And it skis bigger than it looks." I must have cocked a skeptical eyebrow. "You'll see," he'd said.

And I did. The runs were short, some open, some gladed, some with cliffs and chutes. All were blanketed with light powder. All were challenging enough to make the place feel like a much larger mountain. But looking out at the lake from the top, I had trouble reconciling the skiing I was doing with the landscape: an empty white expanse of ice and nothingness with very little vertical relief save for the hill on which we stood.

Mount Bohemia piqued my interest

BUT LOOKING OUT AT THE LAKE FROM THE TOP, I HAD TROUBLE RECONCILING THE SKIING I WAS DOING WITH THE LANDSCAPE: AN EMPTY WHITE EXPANSE OF ICE WITH VERY LITTLE VERTICAL RELIEF SAVE FOR THE HILL ON WHICH WE STOOD.



when I first read about it: steep, ungroomed, with the Midwest's only triple-black runs and an end-of-the-road location in a former copper-mining district. I was intrigued by its uniqueness, and the photos looked legit. I knew it was small—two chairlifts and 550 skiable acres—but who wouldn't want to ski at a place that expressly forbids beginners? A conversation with Lonie Gliberman, the owner, only heightened my curiosity. "We're what skiing was back in the '60s, when it wasn't all about condos," he told me. "Like Taos or Alta—those classic places."

I'd met Rowe the morning after I arrived, and he'd confirmed the dispiriting news I'd heard from locals, that the cold winter meant the lake had frozen over almost completely, turning off the snow machine. But he offered some hope. "You just have to know where to look." It had been a few days since the last dump, a six-incher, but he assured me that there were plenty of stashes out there. "It's like trying to keep a garden from being ravaged by a pack of warthogs, but we've still got snow."

Rowe is 56 but looks 40 and skis like he's 30. He grew up in nearby Calumet and spent 15 years working in emergency medicine, but skiing and a life outdoors kept calling to him. He skied around out West, came home to work as a kayak guide, and spent winters prospecting for powder. He's hiked and skied here since the mid-1980s, long before lifts, and he cut most of the trails himself.

We notched lap after lap in the north-side trees in an area called Haunted Valley. Getting to the best stashes took some work, but the rewards were ample. A typical run: 15 buttery turns through pillowy snow in complete solitude. Soon Rowe was smiling, and so was I.

It had been just a decent snow year—about 220 inches—but the consistently low temperatures had preserved the snow nicely. The average annual total is about 300. The record: 390 inches, in 1978–79.



Rowe is deeply rooted here. His Cornish great-grandfather came to the area to work in the mines. The Keweenaw's copper drew people from all over the world and generated tremendous wealth, and the Victorian buildings lining Calumet's downtown streets speak to a bygone prosperity. "The last mine closed when I was eight," Rowe told me. But he takes great pride in the recreational boomlet that is helping revive the economy. This has long included snowmobiling, nordic skiing, and dogsledding along with summertime boating and fishing. Bohemia opened in 2000 and has found a loyal following. The diehards love its solitude, its powder, and its terrain. They also love the way Gliberman, with Rowe's help, has developed it: slowly and with an eye toward simplicity.

"Here we just get the one mountain," Rowe explained as we rode the lift again in the afternoon. "We have to make the most of it."

The genesis of today's Bohemia was an ambitious 1987 plan commissioned by then-owner Lake Superior Land Company during a time when local timber companies began investigating skiing as a potentially profitable opportunity. "An exceptional ski mountain," the promotional literature called it, promising "a winter vacation experience far superior to that of the region's other ski areas."

First among the advantages cited was the most important: the highest vertical of any resort in the Midwest. The plan called for long groomed runs and extensive slopeside development—even a mountaintop restaurant. It estimated that by 1998, annual skier visits would be nearly 100,000. It was a Cadillac of a plan, bloated and doomed, and when Gliberman arrived to look Bohemia over in 1997, it seemed moribund.

"It just never happened," he told me shortly after I arrived. "There was nothing here, just one test run." We were sitting in one of the interconnected yurts

that constitute Bohemia's base area. There's a central yurt with a kitchen, cash register, and rental shop. Attached to it are two dining yurts with picnic tables and a bar yurt with local

beers on tap. Arrayed around this core are a ski-patrol yurt, a hostel yurt (it looks and smells like a dorm room), and a scattering of private guest cabins and yurts. Breakfast and dinner are included in lodging packages. Gliberman and I ate salad and ravioli from paper plates. A string of construction lights dangled overhead, *South Park* played on a nearby TV, and groups of mostly men (the clientele skews about 80 percent male) sat eating, reading, or playing cards.

Gliberman is an entrepreneur from Detroit, and prior to buying Mount Bohemia, he'd been working in the Canadian Football League on plans for expansion into the U.S. When that project was shut down, Gliberman needed a new one. He was skiing at Vail when he heard someone mention a mothballed ski-resort plan for the Upper Peninsula. He visited and was immediately intrigued. "Beginner and intermediate skiers are well served in the Midwest, but there's a drastic lack of advanced, expert terrain," he said. "And here was Bohemia, the biggest mountain in the Midwest, with the most snow and the potential for the most expert terrain."

He decided to test an idea he'd read in a marketing book: that the narrower your focus, the stronger your brand. To his eye, the earlier plan had failed because it tried to be everything to everyone. A place this remote, he realized, couldn't draw the masses. It would have to be a specialized product, aimed at a particular type of skier. "I thought, why can't a ski resort just be for a niche? Ferrari isn't targeting minivan drivers."

Meanwhile, in the years when the original plan was foundering, Rowe and

Caston chokes on powder above Slide Path in BoHo's backcountry. **OPPOSITE:** Steve Rowe pores over maps with athlete Marcus Caston at the Eagle Harbor Inn.



CLOCKWISE: The “Extreme Back Country” is rated triple black; Caston drops a powdery cliff among the dense trees; The North Pole Bar doubles as a ticket counter in the morning; Slopeside development at Bohemia. The main base yurts contain the rental shop, food counter, main dining area, bar, patrol hut, and a \$35-per-night hostel.



other diehard locals were exploring Bohemia and the hills around it, doing subtle trail work. “Upland beavers,” Rowe called them. They hiked for their runs, sometimes as many as a dozen a day.

A local businessman who knew Rowe asked him to guide Gliberman on his visit, and after a brief internal debate, Rowe agreed. “I really wanted this area to become a sort of outdoors mecca, a skiing, mountain-biking, paddling destination,” he told me on one of our lift rides. “It’s so far from any population center that it was never going to be a crowded experience. So yeah, we had this all to ourselves, but I didn’t see the harm in sharing.”

Gliberman bought the place, hired Rowe, and they pared the Cadillac plan down to something more like a go-cart. Phase I of the 1987 plan called for five lifts. They put in two—a triple and a double—with a shuttle bus along the base road and opened in 2000.

“We made it focused around what it’s good at,” Gliberman explained. That meant no frills and no grooming. “But those first years, it was pretty hard.” The first season, Bohemia opened late and attracted few visitors. The second was worse. One day the lifts closed early because there weren’t *any* skiers. “Driving home that night, I was like, maybe this was a really bad idea.”

But with no outside investors, Gliberman could indulge his stubbornness. In year four, he inaugurated a strategy that likely saved the mountain: a \$99 season pass. Bohemia sold 900 that year. Last year it sold 5,200, and skier visits have jumped from 9,000 to 22,000 in the past decade. (Gliberman estimates that 70 percent of total skier visits are by pass holders.) And with its earned-turns opportunities for those so inclined, Bohemia has ridden the wave of increasing interest in backcountry skiing.

Season passes still cost \$99. There are no plans to build a lodge or add lifts. Bohemia has grown slowly, adding cabins and trails, which now number 90. Both by necessity and design, Gliberman has made an asset of the mountain’s DIY ethos. “We’re purists,” he told me over dinner. “We’re going for that old-time lodge feel, for people to feel taken care of. It leads to a lot of interaction. People meet each other.”

The mining-camp ambience seems to be working. I met skiers with near-

I ASKED WHAT WAS FOR BREAKFAST. “MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, AND FRIDAY IT’S PANCAKES AND SAUSAGES,” HE SAID. “THE OTHER DAYS ARE SAUSAGES AND PANCAKES.”

fanatical attachments to the place. They come from all over the Midwest, even as far away as Cleveland and Indianapolis. I saw old-timers, groups of 20- and 30-somethings having guys’ weekends, multiple father-son tandems, and lots of college students. Demand has been strong enough that for the 2015–16 season Bohemia will make its first major expansion: a cat-skiing operation with 700 feet of vertical and 200 acres on Voodoo Mountain, accessed via a 45-minute cat ride from Bohemia.

Rowe admires the way Gliberman has stuck to his plan. “I give him a ton of credit for keeping it super-modest. People are looking for that alternative, for something more minimalist, more pure, with more value. And it’s not like we’re sitting still. We’re upgrading and changing, but within the idea of keeping this place what it is.”

On Saturday morning the yurts were humming. The prior night’s late arrivals were yawning in the breakfast line. Others skiers had just driven in. I wandered to the bar in search of coffee and found Rick, the bartender, who also handles morning coffee, ticket sales, and anything else that comes up.



I asked what was for breakfast. “Monday, Wednesday, and Friday it’s pancakes and sausages,” he said. “The other days are sausages and pancakes.”

Simplicity in action, I thought. On my way out I passed Gliberman standing behind the register, encouraging a woman to buy a pass next year. “It’s a little slow for a Saturday,” he told me, “but it’ll pick up.”

The hill was mostly empty. I worked the fringes of the liftlines and found great patches of fluffy powder. The terrain varied enough to keep me interested. I began to think of it as a sort of my-first-sidecountry experience, a place where good skiers who live in the Midwest can find a challenging tune-up before a trip out West, and where those who have only ever skied Midwestern hills can be introduced to powder and real steepness. Bohemia has a little bit of everything and offers the illusion, at least for moments, of being a bigger mountain.

The run names defy Gliberman’s simplicity program. There’s a dense proliferation of them within the mountain’s relatively small footprint. Some runs are only a couple hundred feet long. This encourages a sort of obsessive connoisseurship: The regulars memorize the names and rattle off their favorite ways of linking runs together to maximize the vertical, and the fun, of each lap. It creates a series of secret handshakes, a feeling of having to work to master the mountain and claim your own secret stash. (As a blissfully ignorant newcomer, my experience was more like an Easter egg hunt. I found good stuff, but usually by accident.)

Among the multitude of runs are the famous triple black diamonds. Gliberman says the designation lets skiers know they’re in for more challenge than they’ve experienced on double blacks at other Midwestern resorts. And they’re a big attraction—a chance for bragging rights and photo ops. Somewhere in the Extreme Backcountry area, I ran across three young snowboarders scraping down a cliffy triple-black chute, throwing in the occasional butt-slide. “Heck yeah, that was awesome,” said one at the bottom. (Yes, “heck.”) “So, so sick,” said another. They asked if I knew the name of the run, but I was more clueless than they were. “Widowmaker?” I ventured, knowing only that there was a run on the mountain named that. They looked at me pityingly. “No, I think that’s way on the other side,” said one. They rode off.



After a run down either Saturn, Jupiter, or Uranus—I was in the solar system somewhere—I ended up at the bottom of an area called Outer Limits, where I waited for the shuttle back to the lift with a cross section of Bohemians—young snowboarders, older freeheelers—doing what skiers everywhere do: swapping stories about other places they’d skied.

Back at the yurts, I joined up with Gliberman and three people who’d come all the way from Boston to ski Bohemia. I’d met Jeff, his wife Sue, and their friend Sunny the morning before. Like me, they’d heard the crazy stories about extreme skiing in the middle of Lake Superior. This year they bought passes to give themselves the push. “At the very least, we knew it would be an adventure,” said Jeff.

The Bostonians, avid Eastern skiers, were amazed at how well the snow held

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up. Gliberman smiled. "I haven't sharpened my edges in three years." And even as the Saturday crowd swelled, every run featured at least a half dozen great turns. Gliberman darted ahead, leading the way through tight trees and rarely stopping to wait. Occasionally he'd turn back to tell us what he had planned, rattling off a few names of runs, but only a diehard Bohemia-head would have understood what he was talking about. We just followed.

When the lifts closed, I joined the Bostonians for a beer at their cabin, which was one in a row of a dozen or so serviceable structures furnished with bunk beds. (A new cluster of nearby waterfront cabins are more comfortably furnished, though still rustic.) Around the cabins milled a crowd of 20-somethings, mostly dudes, telling tales of the day's adventures over beers and hibachis.

"The snow is so much better than back home," said Jeff, delivering the verdict after two days of skiing at Bohemia. The rest of us agreed. "The website said it's Western-style snow, but I didn't really believe it. And some of the runs feel way, way longer than the 900 feet of vertical. Of course, some of them don't."

A few snowboarders, refusing to let the day end, hiked the hill behind the cabins. One of them straightlined into the parking lot, split a couple of parked cars, and launched an off-axis back flip off the snowbank at the far side.

"Yeah, dude! Nice!" his buddies shouted.

That buzz lingered into the evening. Saturdays tend to be pretty lively in the bar yurt. Many of the skiers I'd met were there, and I met many more as the night went on. It felt quintessentially Midwestern—the niceness, the openness, the genuine interest.

Everyone had high praise for what's been created at Bohemia: a haven for people who love to ski, a place that's friendly and welcoming and pure in a way that big corporate skiing is not.

As Gliberman put it, "People don't want the same old experiences. And I think that's why people like it here. It's different. It's authentic." ♦

Tim Sohn is a New York-based journalist whose work for *Skiing* has focused on off-the-beaten-path ski areas, including a former pig farm in Indiana. He also works as a commercial salmon fisherman in Alaska and is at work on his first book.



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ALL STUCK UP ON HER ROCKY MOUNTAIN VISTAS AND SIERRA SNOWPACK, YET VAGUELY UNFULFILLED, A MASSACHUSETTS GIRL VENTURES BACK TO HER ROOTS FOR A REALITY CHECK. FACE-SHREDDING TREE LINES, SHORT RUNS, BITTER COLD, AND UNVANQUISHABLE EASTERN STOKE? THE PERFECT ANTIDOTE TO WESTERN ENNUI.

BY HEATHER HANSMAN

BRIAN POST (2)

EAST



Looking for an Eastern fix? Start here. Back before lifts, New Hampshire's Tuckerman Ravine was the nexus of American skiing. (Quebec native Hugo Harrison likely feels right at home, weatherwise.) LEFT: The view of Hillman's Highway from the Hermit Lake Shelter.

BY MY SECOND RUN OF THE DAY AT MAD RIVER GLEN I AM BLEEDING FROM THE FACE. MERELY A FLESH WOUND, SURE, BUT IT'S ENOUGH THAT I CAN SEE MY LIP SWELLING BEYOND THE EDGE OF MY GOGGLES.

That morning, standing in line for the single chair, Eamon Duane asked me if I liked tree skiing. “Yeah, of course,” I said. Duane, who coaches the local freeskiing team and has cut trails on the mountain of both the legal and the not-so-much variety, knows Mad River’s every gully and drop. He took me to a dense zipperline called the 20th Hole. I could barely see the trees for all the trees as I followed him through impossibly narrow gaps and windows. And, at one point, I zigged when I should have zagged and got punched in the mouth by a branch.

I had kind of asked for it. I had come looking for a Vermont beat-down because I was starting to worry that I had become an asshole. I’m probably not that different from you (aside from the a-hole part), because my life, or at least my ski life, has been a bit of a stereotype. Grow up digging your edges into the blue ice of the East Coast. Decide you can do better. Move West. Then move West-er, looking for bigger mountains, better snow, radder lines. You can tick off the names of people who have done what I did—Chris Davenport, Jackie Passo, T.J. and Dex. (You know... *Aspen Extreme*?) It’s ski-bum manifest destiny. In a Subaru wagon instead of a covered one.

But somewhere before I hit the Pacific I became jaded and shitty. Unsatisfied. I’d thought the Rockies or the Cascades would fulfill some kind of long-held dream, but instead I felt there was never enough snow, never enough steepness. Winter storm



Doesn't get any East-er than this: Race night at the “Wachusett World Cup,” where nice hard snow is actually welcome (the course holds up better) and tuning is not optional. OPPOSITE: Post-race beers—and waiting for the results—at the Black Diamond.

warnings stopped getting me all tingly. And more and more it seemed like the really zealous skiers I knew were the ones scraping cold, icy laps back in New Hampshire. So, in the teeth of winter, I flew East—back to New England, where I'd fallen in love with skiing in the first place.



MAD RIVER GLEN IS A BIT OF A LOB IF

you want to talk about the kind of thick-skulled dedication to skiing that epitomizes New England. It touts it in those humblebraggy SKIT IF YOU CAN bumper stickers, which are more of an endorsement of the bearer's tenacity than his skiing skills. To hit the curveball, I drove to Wachusett Mountain, in suburban Massachusetts, on a nose-hair-freezing Tuesday evening. The weak February sun was sinking as I rolled into the lodge, and after-school skiing was in full swing. Hormonal tweenage girls spritzed cucumber-melon body spray in the bathroom while the boys they were trying to impress flicked fries at each other, and I was rocketed back to the ski-club trips of my own adolescence.

But I didn't come to ski with middle-schoolers. Wachusett (whose jingle, "Mountain skiing, minutes awayyyyy," must be seared into the memory of everyone who grew up, as I did, in the Boston area) is home to the biggest night-skiing league in the country. It's bigger than Jackson Hole's famed Margarita Cup league, bigger than the Olympian-studded Park City series. Four nights a week, nine weeks a year, racers show up from suburban Connecticut and southern Vermont to run dual GS. It's part old college racers, part people who just want an excuse to ski, a few 50-year-olds looking for love. Pretty decent burgers and massive nachos. "It's 35 seconds of skiing, four hours of talking about it," says Dave Crowley, the mountain's COO.

In the Coppertop Bar, Crowley, whose family has run the mountain since 1969, hands me a beer and tells me I should have come on a Thursday, when his team races. Tuesday is the fast night, when the serious racers show up, but Thursday is the party night, and the people who have been racing since the beginning (no one's sure when it started—'80? '81?) come Thursday to rage. There are rivalries that have been in existence longer than I've been alive. Crowley has been battling his siblings for decades.

On the hill, under the glint of the lights, it is bitterly cold, in the negative teens. My eyes tear up behind my goggles on the lift, but at the top of the course, the racers strip to GS suits and shit-talk each other. One woman loads up her kid, who is too young to ski with poles, with her down coat. He pizzas to the finish to meet her.

Back in the bar, Bob Pentland, who has been the race director for 18 years, announces the results, and racers clamor like kids to check their times. Some of the racers, like Martha Hanright, who usually cleans up the women's division, have been doing this for decades. "Tuesday night was my night out when my kids were little," she says. "I would bring them my medals."



A LOT OF PEOPLE GROW UP SKIING AT

Wachusett or similar hills in the East. There are 88 operational ski resorts in New England and another 51 in New York. Between them they account for more than 13 million skier visits per year. That's a quarter of all American skier visits—more than in any other part of the country except the Rockies, which despite having far fewer resorts (New Hampshire and Colorado, for example, have about the same number) logs 30 percent more visits. Wachusett does about 400,000 skier visits, but it's more the exception than the rule. Scattered across New England are other low-budge local mountains trying to carry on the history of the scrappy local ski hill.

You pass by Whaleback in a flash along I-89. It's one lift and a webbed fistful of runs on the road to Sugarbush or Stowe. It's short but steep, and all the elevation spills back into the parking lot, which is really just a dirt strip parallel to the highway.

Whaleback feels like the platonic ideal of a local ski hill. It smells like fryer grease, old wood, and wet socks, and there are boot bags shoved under every table in the lodge. Places like this are where people become skiers—Olympic freeskiier Julia Krass grew up here—and Whaleback is trying to keep it that way. School groups ski here almost every afternoon, and there's a long-standing Thursday Night Race League.

But running a small ski area is a thin-margined business, and because of that the hill has been through a lot of incarnations, trying to find a financial model that can support affordable skiing for locals. The most recent one, in place since October of 2013, is as a nonprofit—The Upper Valley Snow Sports Foundation—and it's leaning hard on the local community. Dick Harris, the former general manager, says that for every seven dollars they spend to keep the mountain open they make six. They're almost there, he says, but they still cross fingers for solvency, and they have a million-dollar list of upgrades they want to make. "If I could just get people to pull off the highway and night-ski for a couple of hours on their way to Killington on Friday, I think we'd be set."

It's Saturday, and the Core Team, the mountain's freeskiing team, is running a mogul comp right un-

On the hill, under the glint of the lights, it is bitter cold. My eyes tear up behind my goggles on the lift, but at the top of the course, the racers strip to GS suits and shit-talk each other.



der the lift. I ride the double chair with patroller Janis Albrecht and then follow her into the trees and through the park before we end up at the bottom of the bump course. Parents cook waffles and moose steaks on tailgate grills as kids wrestle in the snow and hit a mini kicker. I can see the appeal of doing that every weekend, of having a hill in your backyard.

At the bottom, Evan Dybvig is announcing the comp, wearing a stuffed whale on his head. Dybvig, a two-time Olympic mogul skier, owned Whaleback in its last life, from 2004 to 2013. He wanted to make it a year-round action-sports center, and he had good traction with skiers, but after eight years he and his co-owners couldn't manage their debt,

Powder day at Whaleback, whose steep, peppery slopes rise from the side of New Hampshire's I-89 a little ways from Dartmouth College. **BELOW:** Harrison tops out on Right Gully. Behind him, the fearsome headwall of Tuck's.



and Whaleback closed. The UVSSF bought it from the bank—"We walked in the door after the auction and offered \$300,000," Harris says—and has spent the past year trying to find a way to thread the needle and turn a profit.

Despite the letdown, Dybvig is still here. He runs the Core Team and is invested in the mountain because he thinks it's crucial. "There's a lot of heart in this," he says. "The mountains that make up the core of the ski industry are overlooked and underappreciated."



SKIERS ARE BASICALLY JUNKIES, and they know it. Dybvig and the rest of the people fighting for Whaleback are just trying to share the high—to inspire the kind of lifelong addiction to skiing that makes people irrationally chase snowfall and burn money in search of turns.

For me, that obsessiveness clicked into place in the most iconic of places: New Hampshire's Tuckerman Ravine. One Christmas my dad—in what might have been a self-oriented move to secure a backcountry ski partner—gave me a telemark setup and told me we were going to Tuck's. The legendary bowl on the

east face of Mount Washington has been the proving ground of New England skiing since the 19-teens, when guys like Toni Matt and Dick Durrance, who would go on to shape American skiing, launched themselves over the headwall. My father decided I needed to claim my piece of that heritage, or something like that, so he helped me cut my skins in the parking lot, under the dome light in his car, and we slowly made our way up the Sherburne Trail and into the bowl, getting tangled up in our kick turns, slipping on icy patches. I can still feel how much my knees jackhammered as I struggled to step back into those cable bindings after the hike up, but by the end of my first headwall descent I'd decided that backcountry skiing was basically all I wanted to ever do.

To see if it still hit me the same way, after the grandiose verticality of the Rockies and the Sierra, I asked my dad if he would go back with me. We pulled into the Pinkham Notch parking lot on a clear morning and could barely find a spot. Backcountry skiing

has changed since I left a decade ago. The Vermont Backcountry Alliance, for instance, is one of a handful of relatively new Northeastern nonprofits that advocate for trail building and recreational land use, and, even in February long before the typical Tuck's season, a flood of people were headed for the Ravine, alliance members surely among them.

We take the same route up. He's faster than I am on the flats, but I'm steadier in the steep spots, more solid on my skis after years in steeper mountains. We climb the Sherburne Trail—the main egress for the past 80 years—up to the bottom of the headwall, then turn and head toward Hillman's Highway, the filled-in diagonal slash to the looker's left of the main bowl. The snow is stupid deep for New Hampshire in February, and we get soft turns on the way down, looking out across the valley to Wildcat Mountain. I decide that it's both hard and easy to go back. Scale is a real thing. So is snowfall. But there's something to be said for a sense of place.



FROM TOP: SARAH PRIESTAP/VNEWS; BRIAN POST

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SKI

TOP: What Westerners imagine when they think of Eastern skiing (sugaring-season turns at Mad River Glen).
BELOW: Vermont girl Louise Lintilhac boots up for a day in the White Mountain backcountry near Twin Mountain.



There's something to be said for the psychology of being appreciative, about being stoked when it snows instead of disappointed when it doesn't. Maybe that's part of what East Coast skiing teaches you.



LOUISE LINTILHAC KNOWS what that feels like. After a bunch of years in Crested Butte and a stint on the Freeskiing World Tour, including a fifth place overall in 2012, she moved home to Vermont. She and her husband, Dana Allan, a Mainer, spend a lot of their time and mental energy trying to find steep lines and deep snow. They ski in movies made by Meathead Films, the Vermont-based ski-film company, and they just got back from a killer trip to northern Quebec's Chic-Chocs. But they also kind of love shitty skiing—seem to thrive on finding adventure, or just a few nicely linked turns, in unlikely places. Allan tells me I need to come back for fast-grass season in the fall. Fast-grass season, if you have not heard of it, is the time of year right around the first frost when you can ski the fine layer of ice that coats the grass before it snows. It's a New England specialty. Just don't turn.

Their story starts to sound familiar because I hear versions of it across the region. While I nurse my facial wounds and sip soup in General Stark's Pub at Mad River Glen, Eamon Duane tells me he moved back to Vermont in 2011 sort of by accident after a long stint in Squaw. He came home to help with a family construction project and fell back in love with the mountains and the community. More people than I thought move West and then migrate back, salmon-style, to where they were spawned. Everywhere, people are territorial about

their mountains, but here the feeling seems more ingrained. Almost no one moves to New England for the mountains, but they do come home. Maybe that's why everyone calls it "back East," even if they grew up in California.

As I ask people about why they left or why they stayed—and really about why they love skiing—the answers come in pieces. It could be the people, or the turns that don't come easy, or the feeling that you're onto something no one else quite understands. They like the salty realness of New England. They're not oblivious. Many know what it's like to be Interlodged in Little Cottonwood or make tits-deep turns in Telluride powder. But they seem stoked in a way that I'm not. "I missed the nooks and crannies of New England," John Hoogenboom, another MRG freeskiing coach, told me when I asked him why he'd moved home to Vermont from Utah.

We scour those crannies, he, Duane, and I, spinning laps off of the single until I start to feel glad the lift ride is so long. It's been a fat late winter in Vermont, and the typically scratchy Paradise Cliffs are filled in. So we hunt for pockets of powder, powersliding down iced-over cliff bands, hop-turning around trees. I get hung up, snagged, and twisted in places where they duck and wiggle through, fluid and smooth. The mountains here are different, and so are the ways you move through them. There are fewer places where you can just let gravity take over, and even there you have to be a little brave or a little stupid. My muscles have lost the quick-twitch memory of New England tree skiing.

Powder panic looks different across the country, and we are in the throes of it here. But I have a hunch these guys would still be thwacking through these trees, finding increasingly tight lines regardless of the conditions. There's something to be said for the psychology of being appreciative, about being stoked when it snows instead of disappointed when it doesn't. Maybe that's part of what East Coast skiing teaches you. When it sucks, it sucks, but you go anyway—to Wachusett every Tuesday, or up into the gullies of the Whites. And when it's good, it's really good, and you are hyperaware of it.

On my last day East, I skin up the gut of Mount Mansfield, Vermont's highest peak. It's been a few days since the last storm and the trail up from parking is well tracked. But as we climb higher the tracks thin out, and by the time we reach the saddle there are none. We drop over the back side, toward Stowe, into ancient deciduous forest where we get the kind of floaty, deep turns I thought existed only in the Japan of my dreams.

I am probably still an asshole, but I am gasping for breath and giggling, floored by how good it is.

I drive south that evening, stopping at a general store for dinner, passing snow-piled fields and the lovely dark and deep woods I grew up in as another storm begins. I'm heading back to the Western mountains that pulled me away, and I'm fighting the urge to turn the car around and stay. ♦

Skiing's former digital editor **Heather Hansman** has hit the Pacific Coast. She's now eyeing Alaska.

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A vibrant photograph of three skiers and a snowboarder celebrating on a snowy mountain slope. The skier on the left wears a teal jacket and yellow pants, holding up a yellow ski. The skier in the center wears a red jacket and blue pants, holding up a yellow ski. The snowboarder on the right wears a dark jacket and is holding up a black snowboard. They are all throwing snow into the air, creating a dynamic and joyful scene. The background features snow-covered evergreen trees and a clear blue sky with a bright sun.

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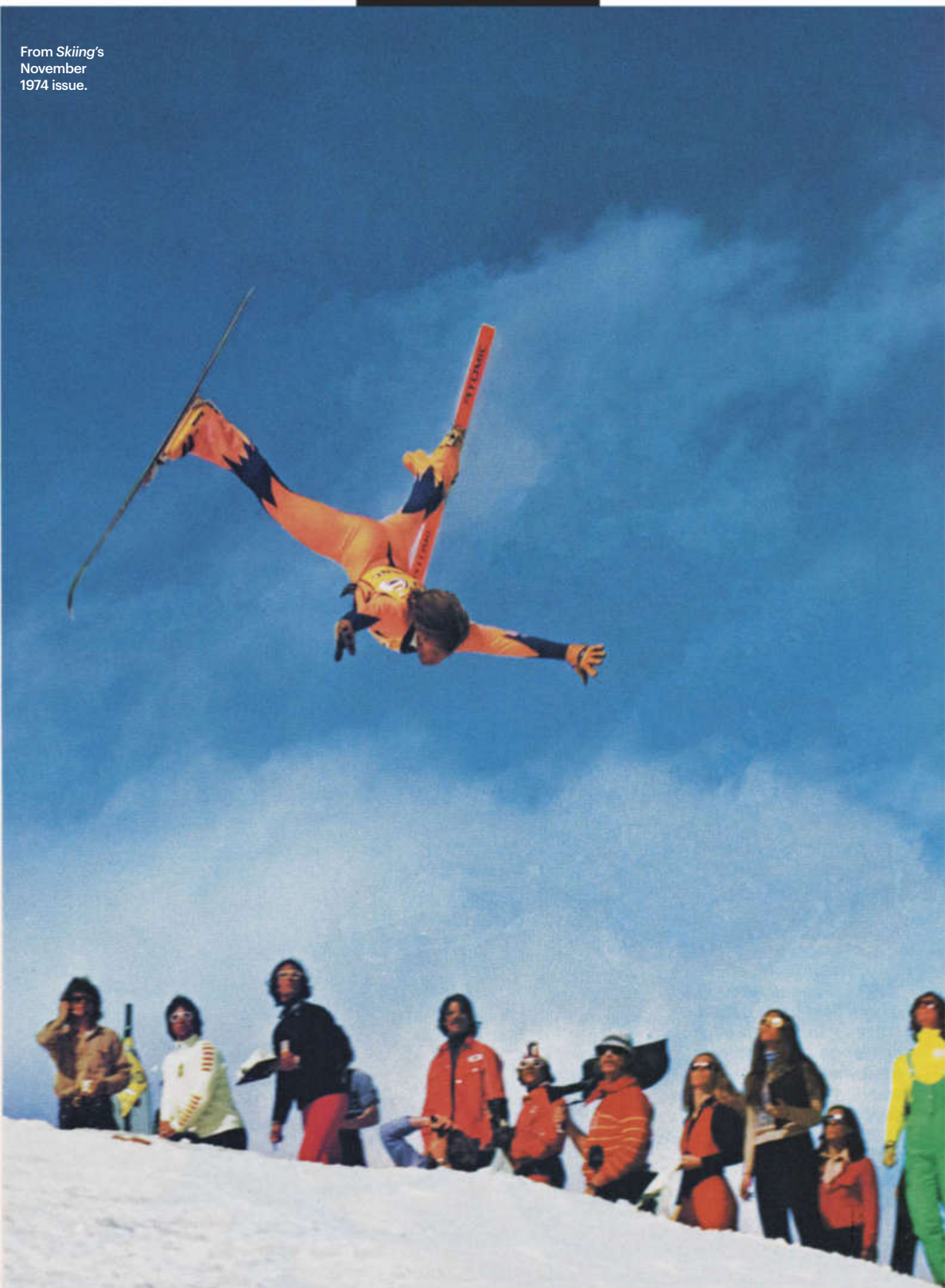
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